
A MODERN JACK AND GILL.

BY ELIZABETH BIGELOW.

The season at Brompton Springs was at its height when there appeared at that famous resort for invalids Mr. Jack Havergal, accompanied by an old bachelor uncle afflicted with an imaginary disease; and Miss Gillian Ripley, with a maiden aunt compelled by (imaginary) chronic hysteria to seek the nerve-invigorating waters of the springs. They came by different routes, and, indeed, from different corners of the globe, the Havergals having just returned from Europe, and the Ripleys from California; and they never had seen each other's faces before. But at the moment when Mr. Jack Havergal saw Miss Gillian Ripley alight from the coach he felt a peculiar sensation in the region of his heart, and though she was very much fatigued, and was in the

habit, at such times, of taking her supper in her own room, Gillian donned a pretty, fresh muslin, fastened a red rose in her dark hair, and went down to supper.

There were very few young ladies at Brompton; the feminine element was composed principally of dowagers and spinsters in search of health; and even Jack's old bachelor uncle (whose imaginary affliction was ossification of the heart) beamed delightedly upon the pretty picture that Gillian made, as she sat opposite him at the table. Then he thought of his money, which a flighty young girl like that would waste upon gewgaws, and decided that it was perhaps a merciful dispensation of Providence that his heart was ossified!

Gillian found friends, at once; the Spence-

leys of New York, father, mother and son. Jack Havergal knew the son, Caryl Spenceley, a young man who had had a very gay career, which was ending, now, in consumption. They had been classmates at college, and Jack had never fancied the young man, but it was amusing to see with what alacrity he set to work to renew his acquaintance with him, now, and so it came to pass, very soon, that Mamma Spenceley (with no daughter of her own) was presenting Mr. Jack Havergal to Miss Gillian Ripley.

"A young man who is likely, some time, to inherit his uncle's large fortune, I understand, my dear," she said, aside, to Gillian.

And to Jack she whispered, —

"Heiress of a maiden aunt, with no end of money!"

For Mrs. Spenceley was a born matchmaker, and would have found it only a pastime to have a half-dozen marriageable daughters on her hands.

In a very short space of time Jack and Gill were *tete-a-tete*.

It was astonishing to find how many tastes they had in common. Gillian adored Wagner, and Jack thought him, without a question, "the music of the future;" he had no doubt but that all opposing musicians would very soon return

"To the vile dust from whence they sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

Gillian liked the languid, dreamy waltz. Jack thought all other dances were vulgar and stupid: the waltz was a pastime for the gods.

Gillian admired Nilsson's singing above all others; no other prima donna had ever touched Jack's soul. And so forth. Only on one point did they disagree. Gillian admired fair-haired beauties, and Jack, looking unutterable things at Gillian's dark loveliness, could not understand how anybody could think a woman beautiful who was not a brunette! Then they compared notes upon their afflicted relatives.

"The old fellow is as well as a man need be," said Jack, referring to his uncle. "There's no more the matter with him than there is with me; but the doctors call his notion a disease — hypochondria — for the sake of bleeding him, I believe, in the direction of the pocket, you understand." And Jack looked anxiously at his companion, to see if his little joke was appreciated;

but, with the usual obtuseness of her sex to little jokes, Miss Gillian only looked profoundly bewildered. "He thinks, he says he knows, that his heart is ossified; says nobody knows what it is to live with a great stone inside one, and that the weight of it is becoming unendurable! Sometimes he keeps me up with him a dozen nights in succession, that I may be on hand to receive his parting blessing. And then, again, he fancies that the ossification is extending, and that in a few years he'll be a pillar of stone! And he's angry if I try to reason him out of it. I had a time of it with him, one night, in Dresden; he declared that he should be a solid stone before morning, and had every doctor in the city summoned. And he threatened to shoot them all, and me too, because they said nothing in the world ailed him!"

"It must be very hard for you!" said Gillian sympathetically.

"Well, a little rough, but I manage to bear it pretty well," said the young man modestly.

He thought — but did not say — that, hard as it was, there were "expectations" about it, and it was better than standing behind a dry-goods counter, as he would probably be doing if it were not for his uncle.

"He's the best old fellow in the world," he went on. "He has only one failing, and that's a sort of crazy fancy too; he is dreadfully afraid of losing a little money, — a little close, in fact. He is always thinking that some penniless lady has matrimonial intentions toward him!"

"Dear me! that's a dreadful failing!" said Gillian with a laugh. "I sha'n't dare to look at him!"

"Then she has n't any money! and the aunt may live to a hundred! Well, it's lucky for me that Kitty has, — not that a fellow would marry for money, of course, — but there must be some to keep the pot boiling," thought Jack.

"My aunt's disease is n't exactly hypochondria," said Gillian, "and I have no doubt that her nerves are disordered; still I am uncharitable enough to think she might help it when she shrieks, and tears her hair, and sheds a flood of tears, and laughs like a maniac when any little thing happens to vex her!"

"I believe that is a more unpleasant kind of a relative to have than an ancient uncle

with an ossified heart, upon my word!" said Jack. "What a time you must have!"

And his blue eyes looked deepest sympathy into her black ones.

"Queer, is n't it, that our afflictions should be so much alike?" murmured Jack.

"Very," responded Gillian softly.

"And then the name! I hope you won't think me very bold, but I have heard Mrs. Spenceley call you Gillian. Jack and Gill! — just think of it!"

And this young man, who, unquestionably, was very bold, gave her another sweet look out of his bonny blue eyes.

Gillian was versed in "Mother Goose" lore too. A little flush crept up to her white forehead, and she dropped her eyes.

"By Jove! she is delicious!" was Jack's inward comment. "So fresh and unsophisticated! None of the wiles of the society belle here! And how simply she's dressed, — not a bit of jewelry, and hair *a la* Marguerite! If she were not a beauty she could n't stand it; but it's refreshing after the Flora McFlimseys one meets! Heigho! I wish Kitty had her artlessness, or she had Kitty's cash!"

All this was out on the moonlit piazza, whither they had strayed from Mrs. Spenceley's protecting wing. In the lighted parlors it is improbable that they would have got so far as the "Mother Goose" reminiscence, at their first meeting.

"And what do you think of Brompton?" asked Miss Gillian, with apparently a bashful desire to turn the conversation from too suggestive topics.

"I'll tell you frankly, I did think it was a beastly hole; but now I think it is the most delightful place that I ever was in in my life!"

That was pretty well for Mr. Jack Havergal, considering that he had never set foot in Brompton until about six hours before.

"I think it is delightful, too," murmured Miss Gillian, and again the long lashes dropped over her beautiful eyes.

Mr. Jack went to bed, longing for the morrow, and more of this "delicious fooling."

The Spenceleys departed by the morning coach, the water not agreeing with Mr. Caryl Spenceley. What could that insufferable little beast mean by putting his head out of the coach window, as it rolled away, and saying to Jack in a tragic, stage whisper, —

"Beware of the Ripley!"

As if he (Jack), who prided himself upon being remarkable as a "lady-killer," and invulnerable himself, needed to be warned against this unsophisticated beauty!

He was very anxious to prejudice his uncle in favor of the Ripleys, in order that he might enjoy the more of the charming Gillian's society, for that eccentric old gentleman was in the habit of making himself exceedingly disagreeable to people whom he did not fancy.

After deep meditation this wily young man devised a scheme.

"Uncle," he remarked the next morning, as they were preparing to descend to the breakfast-table, "Miss Ripley, — the rather plain young lady who sat opposite us at the table, — has an aunt with her, — a very wealthy maiden lady, — who is afflicted with the same disease that you are, ossification of the heart!"

"Indeed! I've always wanted to meet a fellow-sufferer. I shall cultivate her acquaintance! Wealthy, too! so there's no danger!" he added in a lower tone.

"But she is extremely sensitive about it," said Jack, realizing that his fib was one which was very likely to be discovered. "Of course it would n't do to mention it to her!"

"I think, sir, that I am capable of understanding a fellow-sufferer's feelings!" said the old gentleman with dignity, and left Jack in horrible uncertainty whether he meant to inquire after her heart, at the moment of meeting, or not!

He met, at the breakfast-table, Miss Ripley, senior, fresh from the hands of her maid, blooming with roses and lilies that rivaled Nature's own, with a profusion of golden ringlets upon her head, and an exceedingly elaborate and youthful toilet; at the first glance one might have been in doubt whether she was sixteen or sixty. Her niece sat demurely beside her, in a fresh, simple toilet of pure white, without ornaments, except a cluster of rose-buds.

"The aunt is envious of her, and stingy to her, I'll warrant!" thought Jack. "But 'beauty when unadorned adorned the most!' The spinster misses her mark, altogether, in keeping her niece short of fashionable flummery!"

Being only a man, Jack did not see that, simple as Gillian's dress was, in effect, it was the *chef d'œuvre* of a French *modiste*,

and the lace upon it was worth a small fortune.

After breakfast "Jack and Gill" went strolling off together, in the direction of the springs, while the elder Miss Ripley ensconced herself in a shady corner of the piazza, with a bit of fancy work to "quiet her nerves."

Old Mr. Havergal sought her at once, and said, —

"My dear madam, allow me to offer you the profoundest sympathy! Do not hesitate to speak of it, but let us share our woes! I know that your heart is ossified" —

"My heart ossified! at my time of life! What do you mean, sir?" demanded the spinster indignantly. "My heart is beating with the warmest, wildest emotions of youth!"

"My dear madam, I am beginning to learn that it does not interfere with the affections!" said the old gentleman blandly, and took a chair in close proximity to her own.

The spinster remembered that Gillian had told her something about an old gentleman with a curious mania who was here. This must be the one, and she might as well indulge his fancies; besides he was extremely fine-looking and gentlemanly!

So they fell into a friendly chat, the old gentleman touching lightly upon the subject of ossified hearts, after he discovered that it was not agreeable to the lady, and she slumbering and assuming little coquettish airs, as she discovered how very agreeable he could be.

In the mean time "Jack and Gill" were enjoying themselves not less than their elders. They had drunk two glasses apiece of the spring water, and felt exhilarated and heroic, as people always do when they have swallowed something extremely nasty. Now they were *tete-a-tete* under the shade of an old oak-tree. Jack was discussing upon the "hollowness" and "empty glitter" of fashionable life, and the delights of quiet, simple, healthful, country living. "That is her style!" thought this shrewd young man, judging by her dress and manner.

"I, too, long for a quiet life!" said Gillian. "I care nothing for wealth and frivolity; my tastes are very simple. A lovely little cot embowered in trees is my idea of a home!"

"But give me still a friend in my retreat
Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet!"

quoted Jack.

"Yes, there must be one dear one to share it, of course!" murmured Gillian.

That afternoon they all went to drive together, by invitation of old Mr. Havergal. And the intimacy waxed apace; though after that they went no more together, but always in couples.

Jack looked upon his uncle as a confirmed bachelor, and feared nothing from the wiles of a spinster; and he was too much absorbed in his own flirtation to notice how radiant the old gentleman began to look, and how little he said about his ossified heart.

If Gillian had not been there, Jack would have found Brompton an unendurable bore. As it was, the hours flew on wings. He never wearied of her society. Twenty times in a day this cool young man wished that she "had Kitty's cash!"

What Gillian wished nobody knew.

One day, when the end of their stay was drawing near, Gillian appeared gorgeously appareled. Jack changed his mind suddenly about "beauty unadorned." If she had been lovely before, she was glorious, bewildering, now! Jack lost his head completely.

They were sitting together on the piazza, at the witching hour of twilight, and Jack entirely forgot Kitty and her fifty thousand dollars!

"Gillian! my darling! I can't live longer without knowing whether you return my love" —

"Wait a moment, Mr. Havergal! I think I hear the coach, and I expect friends!" said Gillian, in a calm, cold voice, which he could scarcely recognize as hers. She seemed to have changed, altogether, with her change of toilet.

The coach drove up to the door, with its usual flourish of trumpets, and a solitary new arrival issued from it. Jack followed Gillian into the lighted hall. The new arrival, a tall man, with a fierce mustache, deliberately kissed Gillian!

The next moment, Jack, bewildered, wrathful, humiliated, heard the spinster introducing the new arrival to old Mr. Havergal as "Colonel Morrison, her niece's future husband!"

Jack retired, and paced up and down his

room half the night, with a persistent ache in the region of the heart, and a dizzy feeling in his head, which reminded him of "Mother Goose"'s Jack, who, in company with Gill, "fell down, and broke his crown!"

He appeared at the breakfast-table, trying to look as nonchalant as ever, determined to brave it out and not let the "deceitful little minx" think he cared!

And Fate befriended him. The morning coach brought a large party of guests, and among them was Kitty Floyd, his betrothed! Jack welcomed her with an affection which he assuredly would not have shown a day earlier, and which indeed was rather unusual with him.

And what did his recent comrade in flirtation do but give him a sweetly reproachful glance!

"O Jack, to think that Gillian Ripley should have been hiding away here, all summer, and none of her admirers knowing where she was!" said Kitty. "How dangerous for you!"

"Do you know her?" asked Jack rather gruffly.

"Know her! Why, she has been the famous belle in New-York society for three seasons. And, O Jack! she 's a fearful flirt, and the gentlemen call her perfectly irresistible! You see she has been at it so much longer than the rest of us that she

knows how better!" said Kitty, with a pout; "she 's as much as twenty-seven years old! She was famous in Baltimore society before she came to New York. I can't think how it happened that you never heard of her! But I forget how long you have been abroad."

Gillian, with her aunt and her lover, left the next morning. The aunt did not want to go, but declared that she was always a slave to Gillian's whims.

Gillian gave her hand to Jack, as she stepped into the coach, and lifted to his, for one instant, eyes swimming with tears!

"Well, that 's a comfort, any way!" quoth Jack exultantly to himself. "'Gill came tumbling after.'"

But she put her head out of the coach window to say sweetly, —

"I shall send you cards for my wedding, Mr. Havergall!"

"I won't come!" growled Jack.

"But you will surely come to my aunt's, since you will be her nephew!"

I am afraid that it was something nearly allied to profanity which was ground out between Jack's teeth.

"It has n't come to that! That 's the last drop in the bucket!" he muttered.

But as the coach disappeared from sight, in the midst of a cloud of dust, the thought of Kitty's fifty thousand dollars came over him like a breath of balm!

A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY M. L. BRANCH.

There was a sound of saw and hammer all one afternoon in the upper back room of the Locke mansion, and when in the evening Gus brought into the sitting-room a box-trap, every one knew what the sound meant, and no one was more pleased than little Harry when his brother said he might have it.

"I'll go right off and set it in the store-room," he said, "for I know a rat lives in there somewhere, 'cause I saw him the other day when I went after my skates. I saw him just as plain as day; he ran right in behind that big box, and I know I can catch him."

So Harry seized the trap, and was about to go into the store-room "to set it," when he suddenly remembered that he must have something to bait it with; and again he was detained by Gus for a few moments, who explained to him the manner in which the bait should be placed on "the spindle," as he called it.

Harry was impatient while his brother was explaining it all, and the moment he had finished, he ran down into the kitchen, and persuaded Betty, the cook, to toast him some cheese. Then, taking the trap, he hastened to the store-room, and placed it near the end of a box, "just in the right place," he said, "for the rat was sure to come out that way."

After the trap was all ready to spring, Harry waited a few moments, intently watching it, and hid himself behind a barrel, wishing, hoping, and almost believing that the rat, attracted by the odor of the toasted cheese, would come out, and, before

he knew it, find himself imprisoned within the relentless walls of a dungeon. But you know that sometimes you may watch and watch, and the very thing you want to happen, and expect to happen, and know must happen, will not happen at all while you are watching. So although Harry kept as still as any mouse, with the door so nearly closed that there was only a little streak of light starting in toward the trap, and though he even held his breath for fear of frightening the rat if he should come, and though he stood so still that one of his feet "got to sleep," and it seemed as if he had been in there almost as long as Rip Van Winkle slept upon the mountains, yet no rat came.

Harry presently went back to the nursery, and began to play with his ball, when his mamma came in and told him that she and papa were going out to a concert, and she hoped he would be a good boy while they were gone, and mind the nurse. Harry said he would, and in his own mind determined to go to the store-room again to watch that trap, thinking he might even stay there 'till mamma came back, and so be wide awake on her return, and perhaps have a captive rat to exhibit to her.

As soon as they had gone he went to his post, and very carefully and noiselessly sat down upon a stool behind a barrel, where he could see, but not be seen by, the rat, should one venture out. Soon the nurse, finding that Harry was very quiet, and knowing that no harm could befall him there, lay down upon the lounge and dropped asleep. It was nine o'clock, a full hour after Harry's usual bedtime, and he

beganto feel sleepy himself; but he did want to see if anything happened, and he did want to sit up till his mamma's return. But you know that a sleepy little boy is a very, very sleepy little boy, and it is no wonder, that after a while, tired of watching and waiting, Harry was at last keeping the nurse company in dream-land, totally unaware of the presence of a little, long-tailed, black-eyed animal that now and then ran close to his feet, clambered upon the trap, smelt of its sides, and at last peeped wistfully through its open door.

All at once, suddenly, there was a sharp click, a noise of something falling, a few squeals and scratches inside the trap, and the half-frightened, comical cry of an awestruck little boy. Then the store-room door flew open, and up jumped the sleepy, amazed nurse, as Harry bounded toward her, wide awake with excitement, clapping his hands for joy, and exclaiming, —

"I've caught him! I've caught him! I've caught a rat!"

The nurse said there was indeed something in the trap, for it was sprung, and she could hear a running around inside. It was not long before Harry's mamma came, and he related to her his thrilling story of the capture of a rat, and insisted that the trap should be straightway opened.

But it was decided, after much argument and persuasion, that the animal, whatever it was, should be kept imprisoned till morning, when it should be let out in the presence of the family and the "black and tan." So Gus put a flat-iron on the top of the trap to keep it closed tight, and it was n't long before there was a little boy fast asleep in his bed.

Morning came, though when Harry awoke it was pretty late, and the family were all up and at breakfast; when barefooted, and in his red night-gown, he came bounding into the dining-room, and demanded that his trap be opened.

Then there was a convocation of the family in the nursery; the doors were closed; the trap was brought in; Zip, the terrier, was held near it by Gus, who was to let him go when the rat appeared; the nurse

stood in a chair to be out of the way of danger, barefooted Harry clung to his mamma for the same reason I fear, and then papa slowly lifted the trap-door. Out there leaped, not a rat, but a little, sleek, fat, nimble, swift-footed mouse, that ran right across Harry's bare foot, and made him jump like a jumping-jack. Then it darted under the very chair in which nurse was standing, making her scream with fright, while Zip rushed barking after, intent on seizing his prey. There was a great noise for a few minutes, but it suddenly ceased, a look of surprise overspread the intelligent face of Zip, there was a search for the mouse, but nowhere could it be found; and it was at last decided that it must have escaped under the base-board, which was found to have shrunk in one place sufficiently, Harry thought, to admit of its slipping under it.

So the hunt was abandoned, and it was not long before Harry had nearly ceased to feel any regret on account of it. After a while his papa called him into the library, and asked him if he did not want to go to the aquarium, and see all the wonderful fishes there. Of course he did, and soon they were riding along in the horse-car, Harry thinking of what he was going to see, and papa reading the morning paper. Suddenly Harry slipped down off his seat, and, pulling off his cap, exclaimed in great excitement, —

"Oh! there's something in my cap! a live thing!"

His father seized it, and, as he gave it a vigorous shake, sure enough, out dropped the very mouse Harry had caught in his trap! It ran across the car toward three ladies sitting there, and suddenly disappeared under the straw. There were three screams, a quick ring of the bell, three frightened women rushing from the car, three five-cent pieces lost to the conductor, a convulsed papa in the car, an excited boy, and a mouse hid away behind a basket under the seat!

How the mouse got into Harry's cap was never known exactly, unless it ran in there when it was lying on the nursery floor. But that is where it was.

A PARTY IN A GARRET.

BY MISS ELLIS CLARE.

It was the last week in April, and everybody was planning May parties. Many a blossom on mossy knolls in the woods lay with wide-open eyes, wondering why nobody came to claim it! But with the day of May Day came also disappointment and vexation to many happy little hearts, for such a perfect downpour of rain as there was, and no faintest sign of the clouds lifting.

"Oh, dear," sighed Marion Day. "What shall we do? Was there ever anything so provoking?"

"I'm sorry for you," her mother answered. "Of course there can be no going into the woods, but I have been thinking you might have a few friends here. Tom shall harness the ponies and go for them, and you shall have the garret all to yourselves, and picnic there."

Marion pressed back the rising tears at these words, for the garret was a most delightful place, especially in a rainy day, when the drops made such a merry pattering on the roof. It had four large windows, so there were no darksome corners in it, and the children could make just as much noise as they pleased, disturbing no one. You may think that a May party in a garret must be one of the most forlorn things in the world, but that proves that you have never tried it! Moreover, the garret at Mrs. Day's was full of delightful old things stowed away in trunks, — ancient bonnets and cocked hats, satin slippers with high heels and pointed toes, gay-colored dresses, and all sorts of faded splendor of nearly a century ago. Such pretty masquerades as Marion and her friends had held often and

often, up there under the eaves, with no one to see them but the doves that sat on the window-sills outside, pluming themselves and cooing in the sunshine!

Marion was called by many of her friends "May," so you see in summer or winter there was always a *May Day* in that house.

Tom went off in the double-seated pony-wagon, and brought back half-a-dozen of the merriest children that ever frolicked together in sun or shade.

First there was Mabel Flowers, who was also nicknamed May, and there was pretty little May Meadows and May Banks; then there was Rose Mason, Violet Farley and Daisy Fletcher. Wasn't it a real floral party? But the funny part of it was, no one thought about their names till they were eating their picnic-dinner. This was set out on the top of an old tea-chest covered with a crimson and white table-cloth, and suddenly Marion exclaimed, "Well, if this isn't the queerest thing that ever was! We've got flowers enough. See, here's *May Flowers*, a *Rose*, a *Daisy* and a *Violet*, and *I'm May Day!*"

I would like to tell you everything they did to amuse themselves at that party, but it would make my story too long, and beside you can easily imagine what a fine time seven little girls might have, if given the freedom of a garret, with seven dolls, seven picnic baskets full of goodies, and a china tea-set.

If you can not, then I advise you to try it for yourselves, and I think you will agree with them that "a garret is almost as nice as the woods, and sometimes a good deal nicer!"

A SLIP BETWEEN CUP AND LIP.

BY ETHELIN B. BRANDE.

CHAPTER I.

Some one has demanded, — I really forget who, — how it is that so many cobblers have become wonderful men. I will just mention two, who, though dead, are still exercising a silent and a mighty influence upon Christendom, — Jacob Behmen and George Fox. Newton himself "ploughed with Behmen's heifer," and so we owe, indirectly, the greatest scientific impetus of the modern world to a theosophizing shoemaker. The great William Law, the spiritual father of John Wesley and of the Methodist movement of the last century, and — as some say — of the Anglo-Catholic movement of this century, confessed that the humble Jacob was his true teacher. If so, we owe the two greatest impetuses of modern England to a poor Christian cobbler.

If this were to be an essay upon wonderful shoemakers, I think I could add a list which would be really surprising. However, it is not to be an essay upon wonderful shoemakers, but merely the transcript of one episode out of the life of a certain poor, honest, journeyman cobbler, by name Roger Breese, and out of the life of his betrothed sweetheart, Alice Dean. Roger Breese and Alice Dean had been engaged since she was fifteen and he twenty years old. Great poverty, a drunken father, the death of her mother, and the necessity of independent work, had made Alice a thoughtful little woman long before she had reached the age of womanhood, — a fact which I feel it necessary to state, as the prudent reader might otherwise stop during the relation, to say over to himself, or herself, three or four sober old proverbs concerning the evil of very early engagements, and the ignorance of their own minds supposed to be generally characteristic of young girls; with which proverbs I most cordially agree, preserving the right of exclusion from all their conditions to Alice Dean. For if, as a certain spasmodic poet has said, we are to count life by heart-throbs, not by minutes, why, then our little Alice could reckon up heart-throbs enough

at the age of fifteen to attest her right to all the honors, privileges and considerations of fifty.

Alice was a little less than fifteen when she took the place of a maid-of-all-work. This exchange of her miserable home for domestic service was merely an escape out of the fire into the frying-pan. Both of them were a fierce trial to the poor girl; but the latter burnt a little less fiercely. For, although her mistress never beat her, never swore at her, — while her father frequently did both, — because the lady had not heat or passion enough in her nature for such violent exercises, yet she made the little servant's life very bitter to her by her infinite applications of "Thou shalt not." Everything that was humane, natural, pleasant or desirable, had this waiving before it, like the flaming sword, to keep off Alice's eyes, hands, and longings. Above all she was allowed no followers. Mrs. Stammers, having never — she thanked goodness — been in love herself, considered love the most ridiculous folly and delusion under the sun. Even if it might be indulged in by people who had time and money for it, it certainly was not fit for servants. She was often heard to say that love made more thieves than malice or selfishness did; destroyed cold meat more rapidly than fly-blows; and would empty a larder quicker than a whole hungry family. She had had servants with huge appetites, and servants with lovers: she found both expensive; but the latter the most; for even if their own appetites were ordinary, their lovers' were usually exorbitant.

In spite of these restrictions of her mistress, Alice met Roger very often. They managed to have walks together, to betroth themselves to each other; and after five years' steady love, under great difficulties, to fix at last a wedding-day; she by that time being twenty, and he twenty-five.

During these years of courtship they had both worked very hard and saved some money. Roger's situation was as good as his sweetheart's was unpromising. Indeed he always thought, and almost hoped, to

that Alice must need nearly every farthing of her scanty wages for her dress. The proud youth delighted himself with the belief that she was dependent upon him; his love was pleased with the fancy that he should bestow everything on her, and receive nothing from her in return. He intended to set up a small shop of his own, and begin an independent business with his wedded life.

But the long self-reliance of his sweetheart had made her too proud to think of entering a home to which she contributed no tangible goods. It was kind and loving of Roger, she said, and like him to declare that "if she had thousands, he should like her none the better." She should like to have thousands, just to give them to him. Yet, since she had not the income of a duchess or of a banker's heiress, she would do what she could toward enriching him with the income of a poor little servant maid. She kept a secret stocking for her few, far-between and hardly earned guineas. When Roger talked of anything he had bought or contemplated buying, the loving maiden inwardly smiled with her delight at the sly, unexpected additions to his comfort and pleasure which it was her intention and in her power to add. Roger's work was ten miles from his sweetheart's; so he had a walk of twenty miles whenever he wished to see her. He could afford this only once a week, — namely, on Saturday evenings; for then he could sleep at a tavern, spend some of the Sunday with Alice, and return at night, to be in time for the work of the new week.

CHAPTER II.

It so fell out, between the second and third asking of the bans, that our little heroine was taken ill. Her cold mistress, having tried in vain to dissuade her from what she called the false step of marriage, believed every relative duty to be snapped between them by Alice's persistent refusal to become a spinster. So soon, therefore, as she found her useless, she sent her away.

"You would make a convenience of my house, Alice Dean," she said. "You would stay under my roof, although you have already given me warning, — fancy a servant giving warning, indeed, — now, you will find your mistake. I don't know what your future husband may be, — I am not

rich enough to keep sick people and idlers. I think you will remember till the day of your death what a good mistress I have been. All the servants who have left my situation have wished themselves back again."

Alice attempted, in a meek spirit, to discover and imagine all sorts of benefits received by her from Mrs. Stammers. It was a hard and microscopic task; however she succeeded in it at last.

"I am sure, missus," she said, "I thank you heartily for all your kindnesses."

"It is no more than your duty, Alice," answered the lady, with a gratified smile and folding of the hands.

"So, missus. And if you see a young man walking about here on Saturday, looking up and down at the house, ma'm, would you be so very kind, ma'm, as to send the new servant and ask him if his name is Roger Breese; and if it is Roger, ma'm, to ask him to go to my father's and I will send him word where I am, ma'm?" And Alice waited, trembling and blushing.

"Alice Dean, I can't think how you dare to take such a liberty with me and my house," answered her mistress. "I have always warned you of the folly and unfitness of young women, who have their living to get, keeping lovers. You know that my servants are not allowed to have followers; and it is most likely that I shall send an officer after the young man, instead of my servant, if I see him prowling up and down, looking into these windows." So the girl left, dispirited.

Poor Alice feared to go and live with her drunken father, lest she should be insulted by any of his low associates, and lest he should be tempted to lay his hands upon the little store she had laid up for Roger and herself. So she was obliged to seek a lodging in the town, where she could live decently until that day next week, when Roger would take her as his wife to her first and last real home.

The misfortune she most dreaded, — namely, the dissipation of her little capital, — began the moment she had left her mistress's house. To save expense she made up her mind to carry her own trunk to her lodging. She tried to do so, but she found herself too weak. She was obliged to hire a carrier; and that involved a dip into "Roger's money," as she delighted to call it.

So that the dip might be as shallow as possible, she engaged a lad instead of a man for her porter. But before they had half reached the quarter of the town where Alice's lodging was situated, his boyhood began to evince itself in a very visible manner. He panted, and drew long breaths, and perspired greatly, and now and then stumbled under the weight. His pride tried to hide these signs. He endeavored to stimulate himself with the *thought* of his payment; but his efforts at self-encouragement came out *very plainly* in certain noises, and in his unconscious compression and biting of his lips. The tender-hearted lass espied them; she could not endure to see him so vexed and inconvenienced; and so, for the rest of the way, she insisted on bearing half the weight.

When she had arrived in her room, and had dismissed her young porter, and sat down to rest herself, she began to feel the bitter results of her efforts with the heavy trunk. She was very ill when she started; she was now ten times worse. Her head ached fiercely; her breath was short, audible and gasping; her whole body was parched and feverish. She called her landlady into the room, and asked her for a little cold water. The woman had counted on providing a supper for her; as she heard her stay was to last only a week, she meant to make the week a paying one, so she had prepared some two-penny or three-half-penny sausages, which were even then figuring in an imaginary bill of fare at sixpence a piece. In rather a disappointed tone, therefore, she asked Alice if she should bring her nothing to eat. The poor girl said she was sure she could not swallow anything. The landlady said she had some new-laid eggs, — they were a kind that wonderfully cured headache and fever; indeed, she told her that if any of her neighbors were ill in that way, they always came and begged for one of these eggs. Alice was credulous, and did not doubt her landlady's possession of the medical hen which laid such eggs; but Alice was also resolute, — no one could persuade her out of her own methods. She said that she felt a good long sleep was what she needed the most, and that she should at once go to bed. But although she went to bed she could get no sleep; all the long night she was tossing restlessly over and over. She remembered that Roger had promised, if he could get

away, to call on her two or three times before Saturday, for which a friend had offered to lend him a horse and cart. She began to picture to herself his astonishment when he heard that she was gone, and she wondered if her mistress would relent, and be communicative.

She made up her mind that, so soon as the morning had come, she would lie in wait for the new servant, as she went out shopping, and beg her to watch for Roger; and if he called, to tell him where his sweetheart had removed.

But when the morning came, she knew nothing of purposes and resolutions; she was in a brain fever, talking and rambling wildly.

The landlady wondered that she neither saw nor heard anything of her at breakfast; and going up to look after her, found her in that frightful condition. The woman neither knew what money she owned, nor where she came from, nor what connection she had. She sent for the parish doctor. He ordered a nurse for her immediately; so the woman of the house took upon herself to examine the maiden's trunk and pockets, counted out the time which she could keep her and a nurse for her, without injury to herself, out of Alice's little store; and at once offered the place to a personal friend a few doors off.

For three weeks our poor little servant-maid lay unconscious of her condition, at the rough mercy of these two cormorants. Their negligence prolonged her illness. At the end of that time the greater part of her hard-won capital was cruelly dissipated.

CHAPTER III.

Unhappy Roger Breese, Alice's natural protector, knew *not at this time* what had become of his darling. Two days after she had left the place he was walking up and down before the house in his usual manner, hemming and coughing. He had never been so long at that exercise before. He concluded that Mrs. Stammers was detaining Alice, or was in the way somehow; or that Alice was mischievously prolonging the pleasure of hearing her lover's signals, remembering that it was nearly the last time that she should do so forever; so he hemmed and coughed louder. But still no one answered with a merry mocking hem and

cough. No bright eyes suddenly peered above the blind; no round head gave him a series of short, sharp nods, indicating whether he should stay or depart.

"Well," he said to himself, "she's now more mine than her mistress's; I will knock at the door." He did so, and was prepared to see either Alice or Dame Stammers herself; but he started when the door was opened by a new servant. The truth flashed upon him at once. Mrs. Stammers had done with Alice, and would not keep her, *even on the ground upon which she undertook to stay for the coming week, — namely, food and drink, but no pay.*

The new maid could not inform him where his Alice had gone. She said that she had never seen the old servant, for her mistress gave her to understand that she was *not good for much, and invited young men there, and that it was her* (Mrs. Stammers) *invariable custom to see the old servant safely and clearly out of the house before she admitted the new one, saying that "if they only laid their heads together for five minutes, they were sure to corrupt each other."* Roger uttered a strong and angry word or two, said he wished Alice had left the day her time was out, bade the maid good-night, and departed. He went off at once to her father's. He found the miserable man sottish and wandering; he was incapable of being moved by the news of his daughter's departure, and as incapable of giving any clew to her present whereabouts. Roger ran down from the besotted creature's room, and found himself under the dark sky, not knowing whither to turn for his Alice. He went round to all the shops where he had ever known Alice to call. At each place they could only tell him that they had not seen her for the last three or four days, and that another young woman now came on Mrs. Stammers's errands. He exhausted all the time allowed him in this fruitless search. When he came to the place where he was to meet the friends who had promised to give him a lift on the way home, he found them gone; he had arrived too late. He had to walk the ten miles alone, a miserable man, giving himself up to fears, to bemoanings, and once or twice to anger, to wonder, and even to suspicion.

Every evening, for a week, Roger walked twenty miles, from his work to the town and back, seeking his sweetheart, regularly visiting her father and that same series of

tradesmen on whom he had called the first night of his loss. But he received no tidings, good or bad. Sometimes he felt that *even bad news would be better than none*, for the hope of any good explanation of her marvelous disappearance often died out for hours together. Still he persevered in his inquiry.

At last the young men in one of the shops he was wont to call at began to speculate upon his case. When he entered, they winked and smiled, and whispered to one another. They said they could very accurately perceive what was what: she had jilted him; but he was too great a booby to believe it. One or two of them asked if it would not be a true kindness to suggest this explanation to him.

They agreed that it would; and they did so. He answered with such scorn and passion, with such a violent assertion of his Alice's faithfulness, with such threats against any one who should villify her unjustly, that the suggesters wished they had let the subject alone.

At the end of the week, on the day which was to have been their wedding-day, while Alice lay tossing over restlessly, and talking wild nonsense, he came into the town to settle in his own house and shop. As night after night he returned alone to the house he had bought and furnished for another, still without news of her, he took forth from his memory the suggestion of the young shopmen; he laid it out, so to speak, before him; he turned it over and over; he looked at it in every light, on every side; he began to admit its possibility; and at last, in a morbid mood, he half believed it.

His shop was still unfinished, and he spent his time mainly in traveling hither and thither, seeking stock for it. But he went about all business poorly, and with a heavy and half-broken heart. It seemed a mockery to him to be making such preparations. He did not believe he should live to use them. He did not want to do so. For the mystery of Alice's departure, her terrible silence, and this gradual but surely excusable admission into his heart of suspicion of her faith and love toward him, plucked all the zest and purpose out of his life. *It was for her sake he had worked submissively as a foreman so many years; for her sake he had stinted himself in dress, amusement, indulgences of all kinds, and found delight in such sacrifices.* Every cut

of a saw, every blow of a hammer or nail, every coat of paint, every boot and shoe in his shop, held in his mind some relation to her comfort and prosperity, as a part of that household of which she was about to be the daily sunshine; the source and centre of all its light and warmth and pleasantness; the measure of its work and rest.

CHAPTER IV.

At last Alice came to herself; in a little while she rose from her bed in good health. But she was quite penniless. Her greedy attendants had disposed of every mite of her little fortune; even her wedding-clothes had gone into the nasty hands of the pawn-brokers, for medicine, food, and lodging.

She felt ashamed, the proud lass, to send after Roger, or let him see her as she was. She got a little employment as a charwoman, at one house and another, through the recommendation of the Sisters of Mercy and the parish clergyman, who were themselves too poor to give her any other help. But she kept from them the story of her love and betrothal, and, by doing so, kept peace from the aching heart of her Roger; for the priest and the sisters, had they known it, would at once have sent her off to him, or have fetched him to her. She made up her mind to continue cheerful at charring until she could re-purchase some of her good clothes. She would then visit Roger, make known her condition to him, confess all the story of her savings, and the sad way in which it was lost, and steadily insist upon the wedding being put off until she had removed her uneasiness, and regained her sense of independence, by recovering at least some part of her former wealth. Her disposition was all compact of cheerfulness and hope. Whenever she had found anything broken, instead of standing over it crying, she had looked to see if it could be mended; if it could not, she tried to procure another thing of its kind.

So she dealt with her own broken prospects, just as she had been used to deal with her mistress's broken china. She kept her mind fixed upon their restoration. This hope gave her great zest and eagerness in her servile work. She never let herself remember that the time had come in which, except for her misfortune, she would have

been a bride and a mistress of a household; but she set about her dull actualities as if no such bright possibility had ever belonged to her. She looked forward to the glory of that moment when she should again find her head at rest on the dear shoulder of her Roger. She went to her work singing, she came from it singing. She said to herself, "To think would destroy me; I shall never be able to recover myself if I ponder on my loss and my present state."

Thus she kept up a fever of counter excitement by shutting out of her thoughts all truth which might excite her,—the truth of Roger's astonishment and pain. Whenever she found her mind inclining to the realization of his suffering, she would sigh and grieve; but the moment the echo of her sigh struck athwart her consciousness, she arrested herself. "This will not do," she would say; "it will be all the better afterward; our happiness will more than make up for our misery." She never waited in quietness of spirit, and calmly analyzed or probed these ill-digested, hasty deductions. If she had done so she would have espied a monstrous residuum of "proper pride" underlying all the other elements of her reluctance to see Roger as she was. If she had done so, she would have seen what wretchedness, doubt and despair she was sowing in the heart of her Roger.

When that quakerly impulse sprang up in her, she scrubbed or walked or hummed more vigorously; if a tear for Roger started into her eye, she used it as mercilessly as her sighs, and brushed it hurriedly away. She felt that if she looked at the present, she should be weakened and do nothing. It was only by keeping the end before her that she could find spirit and moral sinew for work. And whilst she was at work, her efforts raised a dust round her which hid everything but those efforts.

But where was the need of all this? What was the end of her eager and incessant striving? Would Roger love her the less for having suffered and lost all? Would he love her the less for having but one gown, and that an old and ragged one? for having shoes with holes in them? for being penniless? She knew him better; she knew that he never suspected she had a farthing of her own. She knew that the thought was a delightful one to his open, generous nature, as it made him feel him-

self the supplier of all her needs. But the little maid was vain.

She had tasted the sweet, pernicious, intoxicating draught of false independence. The draught gave her stimulus for her work. In a few weeks she had made enough to redeem her best new dresses, her shoes, and other articles of dress, and to pay her standing debts. Roger, in the mean time, not having, like Alice, any insight into the causes of her mysterious absence and silence, could not, as she did, find solace, excitement and delight in looking forward. On the contrary, the future was his most bitter thought. His disappointments lay there. All the glory of his life was behind him,—gone by forever. And even that past glory, since suspicion and the present appearance of things had begun to cloud it, lost all its golden worth. It had been no true possession. It was miserable to think that, even when he was most happy, he was only so by being ignorant of the truth, by trusting in heartless and well-acted deceit.

Before him he could see nothing but unavoidable misery; in the present his thoughts exercised themselves worryingly on the causes of Alice's strange departure, until, by slow processes, not without, as he conceived, two ocular proofs, he admitted the awful and maddening conclusion that she was dishonest and unfaithful.

The first ocular proof was as follows: One dark, foggy night, going from the station to his home, after a dull day, all through which his body had been taken up by business, but he himself by the fiery vexation of his thoughts, a shape rushed by him which startled him, it was so like Alice. He would almost have ventured an oath it was she. Without thinking, he pursued the figure. It turned down some darker street, and was lost in the fog. The other glimpse he had of it deepened his persuasion that it was really his affianced bride whom he had seen. "Whose is she now? What relation to those she chooses in preference to me?" He went home with these thoughts burning at his heart. Still he determined with himself that he would not be unjust. He fought a brave, hard battle with his suspicions. The faith of his heart in Alice strove against that testimony of his senses, and overcame. He concluded that his senses had deluded him. But he also concluded that if Alice were in the town, and could keep herself from him at a time when she was so sacred-

ly bound, it must be because she had some other lover. He found this hard to believe. The very memory, almost the taste, of her last kisses rose to contradict it. He could not persuade himself that those kisses were deceitful and counterfeit.

A few days after, as he was walking slowly along, musing gloomily over this mysterious blow, he chanced suddenly to look up, and saw the sunshine fall upon a shape which he had now no doubt of. He saw it was Alice who hurriedly turned the corner at the end of the street. He was determined to stop her and upbraid her; he felt in a moment half strong enough to fling back in her face the love of long years. On second thoughts, however, he resolved to discover where she was living, and for whom and for what she had broken her faith. He noticed that her clothes were very ragged and ill-looking; perhaps already she had begun to earn the wages of unfaithfulness by being so cruelly used. He kept at a moderate distance behind her, slinking and hiding between intervenient persons. In the way he followed her through several streets; but turning suddenly in a more crowded thoroughfare, as he was straining forward eagerly to keep a glimpse of Alice in the distance, quite regardless of what was near by, a burly dustman ran against him. He stumbled and fell. When he sprang up again, he could see nothing of that soiled bonnet and torn dress his eyes had been so steadily pursuing. "Alas!" he thought to himself, "what matters it to find where she is, what she is doing?" Plainly she was in the town; near him, yet not caring to see him; trying to conceal herself from him. Her very rags, perhaps, were but a disguise.

He felt so faint and bewildered that he had to stumble into a tavern and call for some brandy. As he sat still there, looking the awful changes of his life in the face, he made up his mind to depart out of the country. A map of New Zealand hung on one side of the fire, a view of Otago on the other. He talked with two men in the room about emigration. The old town of his youth, the theatre now of such a mockery, seemed to grow hateful to him. He talked with these men until they persuaded him to emigrate. But it was not the golden vision of wealth which they set before him that tempted him; he was impelled by the strong desire to burst all his present tram-

mels. He hardly knew whether his pride and indignation would save, or his sense of loss destroy him. He made up his mind to get rid of everything—shop and house and business—at once.

In two hours' time—having made an appointment with the men for the next day—he returned to his shop. Two or three painters immediately came up to him with inquiries. Would he have the shutters painted green? or grained like oak? or picked out with different colors?

He rushed by them, answering, "Oh, anyhow."

The men looked confused. Experience had taught them that anyhow was always wrong. One then advised oak.

"I don't care the least how the shutters are painted. I shall never see them, I hope. I shall sell the shop, and go off in a day or two to New Zealand."

The men fell back, and stared at one another. They looked at him again, as doubting whether or no he was drunk, or had begun to grow insane through his troubles, which all of them pretty accurately knew. The master determined to present his bill, and insure payment. Roger said he would pay him immediately. Watching the painter make out his bill, his young apprentice came whistling into the shop. After a little while he said to his master carelessly,—

"Have you seen the person in the parlor, sir?"

"What person? No," said he.

"There was one came for you an hour ago," said the lad, "and she told me that she should wait until you came in."

Roger gave a murmur, a sigh, and pushed his way gloomily through the workmen and implements and packages into the room

at the back of the shop. Some one fell back as he did so. Ah, through the little window betwixt the shop and the parlor, Alice had been watching him ever since he came in. Her heart lashed her with pain and woe as she saw the thin figure and pinched altered face, and felt that she had made him so meagre and so white. She leaned on the sill and sobbed. She dared not go through to him, for she feared the scene of their meeting in the open gaze of the workmen.

Nor shall I describe that scene here. It was a long while before either of them could realize its truth, and particularly before Roger could do so. He asked if he had not passed her one night in the fog. She answered yes, that the night and the early morning were the only times she dared go out, she so dreaded meeting him. He asked her if he had not seen her that very day, three hours ago. She blushed and pointed to her dress. Roger looked down at it; it was a silken one. She told him she was rushing to fetch it out of pawn, on purpose to visit him and explain herself, when he perceived her that morning; and then she added the story of her penury and illness, with many tears and prayers for forgiveness.

Roger was so thankful that he wondered what he could have to forgive. Her proposals to regain her little capital "just for vanity's sake," he would not listen to, but demanded, as the only penance, that they should be married before any more separations were possible. He called on the emigration agents—who said he was a very fickle man—and broke off his negotiations; but as a kind of recompense, he invited them to eat, drink and dance at his wedding.

THE RED LIGHT: A STORY OF THE TRAIN-WRECKERS.

BY HENRI MONTCALM.

Reader, you who have doubtless been more or less a traveler by railroad all your life, have you ever "ridden on the locomotive"? If not, take my advice, and, the next time you journey to Montreal or Savannah or Chicago, leave your comfortable seat in the palace car a while, bribe the engineer with a cigar, and take your place beside him in the cab. You will, perhaps, enjoy sensations more novel and interesting than you can guess. And possibly too, if the cigar be a particularly good one, the sooty-faced Jehu who holds the reins of your iron steed may be moved to talk of himself, and out of his varied experiences may relate to you some adventure as thrilling as one which it was my good fortune to hear not long since under similar circumstances.

Speeding along over one of the great western roads between eight and nine o'clock one evening, we had discovered a danger signal ahead; and slowing up we presently came upon a freight train which had run off the track. So we found ourselves obliged to wait an hour or more until the way could be cleared; and it was during that interval that I listened to the story of the Red Light.

"You noticed how I jumped up and said something no Christian man ought to say, the minute I spied that red lantern?" began the engineer, when at length he found there was nothing to be done but to sit down and wait patiently. "That was because for an instant I thought I was back twenty years ago, seeing what I saw then. I am not a superstitious man; but I believe what I see, and I believe that twenty years ago this very month, almost at this same point in the road, I saw a red light down the track there, held by no human hands and to be accounted for only in a supernatural way."

"I was only a fireman then, just starting out; and Jim Boram—Jim was the first man that ever ran an engine over this road—was engineer. It was, as I say, twenty years ago almost to a day and just about this time in the evening, I should judge. We were coming through the woods back here at a pretty good rate, when all at once Jim jumped up and put his hand on her throat

just as you saw me do a few minutes ago, motioning at the same time for me to whistle down the brakes. And as I turned to pull the string and looked out ahead, I saw, as distinctly as you saw it tonight, a red light, an eighth of a mile or so ahead, waving round and round as if somebody were coming down the track with it to stop the train.

"And yet, strange to say, when at length we pulled up and got off to see what was the matter, no light or any person was to be found anywhere; and a careful examination for half a mile further on, down through the cut which you will see above here when we start up, failed to show any danger.

"Of course we were mad enough, all hands of us, when we came to start up again, half an hour behind time. Jim swore again and again that the scoundrel who played the trick on us ought to be tied down to the track and a train run over him at full speed. It certainly was a dirty trick and worthy of the severest punishment, but we were not likely to catch the offender, and we soon dismissed the subject. And we should perhaps very soon have forgotten it altogether, but that the very next night, at precisely the same time and place, precisely the same thing occurred. We saw the red light again, just as we were coming out of the woods as before, and of course we came to a stop once more. We could not well do less, you know. We could not run right on with a danger signal staring us in the face, even if we were almost certain it meant nothing. But, when we came to get out and run ahead, no signs of man or light or danger of any kind were to be seen.

"You can well imagine what a feeling there was among us train-men after this repetition of the trick,—as we then took it to be. And when we got up to C—, and told the story, the superintendent, who happened to be in the office that night, was madder than any of us, and declared he would go to the printer and have some reward bills struck off at once. He was as good as his word too; and the very next morning a reward of five hundred dollars was publicly offered for

the detection of the person who had twice stopped the train.

"I am not an over-rich man now, but in those days I was poorer than poverty. I had n't a cent laid by, and five hundred dollars seemed a big pile to me, you may be sure. And when I saw those posters that morning, I said to myself quite confidently, 'Nixon, that money must be yours! What you've got to do is to find out the man that showed that light, and that, too, before any one else gets ahead of you.'

"Well, I never did find out about the light; and indeed I know well enough now it was one of those things that is beyond all human finding out. But I did find out something else, and I got the five hundred dollars for doing it; and that's what I'm coming at.

"C—— is only ten miles above here; and it was there that the train changed engines and Boram and I finished our day's work. Then we were off duty until nine in the morning, when we ran back over the road again, returning each night. But the morning after this second appearance of the red light, I awoke with a notion of my own in my head; and so I sent my brother down to take my place on the engine. George was nearly as old as myself. He was a great favorite with Boram, and had often 'fired' in my place before now. As for me, I meant to stay home during the day, and at night I proposed to investigate the mystery of the red light.

"So I came down on the evening train, getting off at E—— (we should have reached there in three minutes more tonight if this freight had not stopped us) at dark, and starting off on foot down the track to this place, where for two nights the red light had been shown, and where, I thought it more than probable, it would be once more shown tonight. Things that come twice are apt to come three times, you know. And I meant to get down here before the time for the train, and to keep watch for the rascal who stopped us, and take possession of him, too, if I was big enough.

"As I have said, there is a deep cut up here just beyond, — I'll show it to you after we start up, — and I had to come down through there to reach this spot. It was a darkish night anyway, this particular one of which I'm speaking, and it was doubly so when I came to get into this cut, with the embankment rising forty feet high on either

side of me and shutting out what little light there was. When I was about half way through, walking straight along without a thought of anybody's being near me, all at once, at the side of the track and not six feet from me, I heard some one sneeze.

"I stopped short and looked around. It was dark as a pocket, and yet I fancied I could see a number of dark forms crouching there before me.

"'Hollo, you!' I said, not a little startled, I confess. 'Who's there?'

"'What's that to you?' returned a gruff voice from out of the darkness on the other side of the track.

"I turned in that direction; and almost the instant that I did so, I heard a step behind, and then, before I could wheel around, I felt a pair of stout arms thrown tightly around me, and the next instant I knew myself to be surrounded by four men, all probably larger and stronger than myself, who, in spite of my struggles, bound me quickly and securely and laid me down by the side of the track.

"I am naturally cool-headed, and I may say that at this time, though a little confused by the unexpected turn of affairs, my emotions presently were rather of curiosity than alarm. I could not imagine who these men were nor what was their intention: but I soon made up my mind that they were a rough set of characters; and I quickly learned, too, for what purpose they were here.

"Having bound me hand and foot, they paid no more attention to me in any way, but went on with the business in hand. One of them lighted a match, and consulted his watch. I saw his features distinctly for a moment as he did so; and I assure you the sight was by no means re-assuring, for a more cut-throat-looking face I never beheld. Presently he spoke in the gruff, harsh tones which had first addressed me.

"'The train'll be 'long in exactly twenty minutes,' he said. 'What we're goin' ter do's got ter be done in a hurry. Who's got the crowbars?'

"'Here,' responded one of the others. 'There a'n't but one, though.'

"'Where's t'other?'

"'I heft it away. There wa'n't no use luggin' 'em both.'

"'Blarst you! yer too lazy ter live. Gimme that one.'

"Thereupon the speaker, who evidently

was the leader of the gang, took the bar and began prying up one of the rails of the track, —at least, such I judged to be the case from what little I could see and hear. The others stood about him, assisting in one way and another as he directed, and after some ten or fifteen minutes' work a rail on each side of the track was removed from its place, and the villains congratulated themselves that the train — which had just been heard to whistle at a station five miles down the road — would be thrown violently from the track upon entering the cut. What possible benefit the men themselves expected to derive from such an accident, I don't know, and at that time it did not occur to me to ask myself. At that moment I realized but one thing, thought of but one thing, — that the track had been torn up, and that in less than five minutes the train would come rushing along at full speed, and that not only my own brother and Boram, who were on the engine, but probably many others, would be hurled to instant destruction.

"Great Heaven! was it possible that four or five minutes more would make such fearful difference; that God would permit such a cold-blooded plot to work itself out? Could I, who knew it all beforehand, and who would gladly risk any and every thing to save them, — could I give no warning? Alas! here I was entirely in the power of these wholesale assassins, unable to move hand or foot.

"Suddenly I thought of the red light. Would it appear again, as I had counted on? Alas! I scarcely dared hope as much now. And, even if it did, I doubted if Boram would pull up for it a third time. He had declared, the night before, that he would not be cheated into stopping the train again.

"Overcome by the prospect of so horrible a disaster, and scarcely knowing what I did, I cried aloud to the men themselves, beseeching them to forego their nefarious purpose, and to signal the train before it was too late. But I might have saved my breath: they only cursed me, and bade me hold my peace.

"Suddenly, while I was sitting there on the ground, with a cold sweat starting out all over me, the leader uttered an exclamation.

"'Hist!' he said in a whisper. 'Somebody's comin' with a lantern. Git down there, every one of ye, an' keep quiet. He

's comin' down ther track. If he does n't see us, we 'll let him pass. If he does see us, — so much the worse for him.'

So they came and crouched down beside me at the side of the track; and I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder, and a breath, hot with passion and strong drink, hissing in my ear. It was still the leader who spoke.

"'There 's somebody comin' along the track,' he said. 'If you open your head, or move a finger, I 'll kill you where you lay.'

"I shuddered, and my heart beat doubly quick at his words. I knew well that he stood over me, with the crowbar upraised, ready to do as he said.

"Then, all breathless and silent, we waited for the new-comer to pass. And all at once, with no sound of any footstep nor sign of any human presence, there came slowly into sight, and advanced down the track before the eyes of each one of us, a red light. I knew it in an instant for the mysterious light that on the two previous nights suddenly appeared above the track. And I knew too, now for the first time, that it was simply a Light, and that no human hand bore it along. I know what you will say to this, — that I was deceived; that, if there was a light, there must have been somebody with it. I know how it must seem to you, for I know how it would have seemed to me if some one else should tell me the story.

"I say I knew that this red light was something supernatural, — the ghost of a light, if you will, — and I had not the slightest intention of crying out. Yet for the life of me I could not repress a start as the mysterious light came fully opposite, and I plainly saw what the wreckers themselves did not seem to comprehend at all, — that there would have been no ear to hear my cry.

"That start was well-nigh fatal. I heard a muttered curse above my head, I knew that the bar was descending swiftly, and then a bright flash of light seemed to pass before my eyes, and I lost all consciousness.

"Of course, since I am here to tell the story, it did n't kill me. But, if the coward who dealt the blow had had a little more light to guide him, I never should have come to myself again ten minutes later to find them throwing water in my face, and

Jim Boram bending over me, groaning and swearing all in a breath.

"I was a good deal confused when I first opened my eyes. For the moment it seemed to me that I was on the engine, as usual; and I shouted, —

" 'Jim! Jim! for the love of God, stop her! There 's the red light again, and it means something this time. They 've torn up the track in the cut.'

" 'I know it, Nix,' says Jim. 'But it 's all right. I pulled up just in time. I should n't have, though, only George he saw the light first, and jerked the whistle-string in a jiffy. After that, I thought it best to reverse. It 's no easy thing, after all, pushing on at full speed with a danger-signal ahead. But how do you feel, boy?

You 've got an awful gouge on the side of your head.'

"Then I began to remember more distinctly.

" 'Where are they, — the wreckers?' I gasped, setting my teeth.

" 'Cut and run. The men are out after 'em; but I doubt if they catch 'em. It 's an awful dark night.'

"And as for the red light," the engineer concluded, "of course you understand that it had appeared and disappeared just as on the two nights previous. And it was never seen again, nor ever explained. You may account for it as you like: I know that God was good, and he sent it.

"But I reckon they 're ready to move on ahead there: here comes Conductor Niles.

A SUCCESSFUL JOKE.

BY LOUISE DUPEE.

Jennie had nothing in the world to wear to the lawn party, and yet nothing would have tempted her to stay away. In the first place, it was little short of a miracle that she had received an invitation. She was a stranger in Willoughby, and her aunt, the elderly maiden lady whom she was visiting, did not go into society at all. But the river ran just back of her aunt's little garden, and there the young people congregated on summer nights. Jennie went out for a solitary row one lovely twilight, and made the acquaintance of the Percivals, the great people of the place, very unexpectedly. Young Miss Percival was out rowing her mother and sister, and, through some accident, lost one of her oars. The boat was drifting away in the most unhappy manner, for the tide was strong, when Jennie went to their rescue, and took the party into her own boat, rowing them safely to the shore. After that she met them again and again, and they were all disposed to be very

civil, especially the young gentleman of the party, Mr. John Percival, who was determined that his sister should introduce him to her whether she was willing or no.

To tell the truth, Miss Percival was not anxious that her brother should become acquainted with Jennie, for she was not only very pretty, but very bright and attractive. And it was also very evident that she was nobody, or she would not be the niece of old Miss Sewall, and wear print dresses all day and not a scrap of jewelry; though she carried her head like a little duchess, and her manners were as proud and indifferent as their own.

John Percival was expected to marry somebody; he had a right to be expected to do so. The Percivals were an old aristocratic family. They owned great storehouses on land, and ships at sea, and John was a handsome, manly fellow as one often sees.

Miss Percival confided her fears on John's

account to her mother before he had spoken hardly a dozen words to Jennie.

"She is so stylish in her way, and is so much quicker and brighter than Lou Preble. He won't look at her when this airy little piece is about," said she.

"Folly," said her mother. "As if our John would ever stoop to the niece of old Miss Sewall. She seems a pretty, well-behaved girl, though, and I suppose very lonely. I think you had better be civil to her, Elizabeth. Your father always liked the Sewalls. They are an honest race, though of course the Percivals never associated with them."

"I'm not so sure that there is no danger, mamma. John is very much fascinated by her, already. But, indeed, I find her very agreeable myself; and, if you say so, I will invite her to the lawn party we were planning for the fifteenth."

"I am not afraid for John," replied Mrs. Percival. "He thinks a great deal of blood, and if he does not wish to marry Lou Preble, he will certainly not marry into any family of less consequence than hers."

Willoughby is an old, old town, and the old families of Willoughby consider themselves superior to all the world. So Jennie's invitation to the lawn party was a great surprise to her aunt, who, ever since her childhood, had looked wonderingly at the audacious white clovers, even, which dared to show their vagrant footprints on the velvet-smooth lawn of the old Percival mansion.

"What will you wear, Jennie?" she said, after recovering her breath.

"I am sure I don't know," said Jennie meditatively. "Could n't I wear my gray cashmere?"

"O dear! no," said Miss Sewall. "The Percivals' lawn parties are dreadfully dressy affairs. They wear white muslins and laces, and all sorts of fanciful shepherdess costumes, scarlet-silk petticoats and velvet bodices, and I don't know what not. Mrs. Dr. White is making over an old Dolly-Varden silk of her own for Tilly to wear. I saw it this morning. I suppose you'll have to wear your black silk, unless you take that old gray silk of mine, and make it over with something gay."

But no, Jennie would not wear her black silk, neither did she accept the gray silk of her aunt. A delicate, lovely muslin, with a pattern of flowers, was what she would

have preferred; but even print was preferable to silk on such an occasion. Finally, after a week of indecision, of trying on this thing and that looped and draped *à la Watteau*, and touched up with gay ribbons, Jennie finally fell back upon her first thought, the gray cashmere.

She happened to have in her possession a quantity of large silver-gray beads, resembling Roman pearls. Her sailor brother brought them home to her from some foreign port, and she had worn them more than once, with a gray costume, to great advantage. She braided them into her black hair, she trimmed them about her waist, she looped her skirts with long, graceful strings of them, but wore no other ornament; and when she had completed her toilet, even Aunt Jane, who had not approved of the costume at all, was forced to acknowledge that she was like a picture in it. The pale gray tint of the dress harmonized beautifully with her rich, dark complexion, and the shimmer of the beads on the dull fabric was extremely effective. All the color she needed was in her cheeks, all the sparkle in her eyes.

The Percival lawn was a gay scene. The young ladies, in their picturesque dresses, looked like a flock of butterflies. Rows of airy Chinese lanterns were hanging everywhere, that the evening should be as brilliant, and more enchanting than the daylight.

The fountain was surrounded by heaps of bright-colored blossoms. Airy white tents were scattered about here and there, and the refreshment table, spread in the largest of these, was like a picture in itself. The band, artfully hidden by clustering branches, just on the border of the lawn, tossed the sweetest harmonies into the midst of the gay groups. Jennie was rather late, and her appearance created quite a sensation.

"Where did you find such a *distingue* personage?" said Mrs. Everett, *nee* Percival, Elizabeth's cousin, who had just arrived from Paris. "Really, Henry," speaking to her husband, "you must see her. The girl is magnificent."

"Oh, she is only old Miss Sewall's niece," replied Elizabeth quickly. "I think her rather handsome."

"Is she married or engaged?" inquired Mrs. Everett.

"She is n't married, certainly, and I

don't think she is engaged," said Miss Percival calmly.

"Then look out for John."

Miss Percival thought she would look out for John. He was already at Jennie's side, admiration showing in his every glance; and his sister did not find it easy to draw his attention from her even for one moment.

"John," said she, hurrying breathlessly toward him, "excuse me, but will you come with me a moment? The table is n't quite right, and Lou and I need some assistance in moving the heavy vases."

"Where is Thomas?" asked Mr. Percival, looking exceedingly annoyed, not to say angry, at the interruption.

"He is busy," was the reply; and Mr. Percival knew that his sister was telling a fib as well as she knew it herself.

"Oh, here is Thomas, now. He looks decidedly as if he were awaiting orders. Thomas, Miss Percival requires your assistance in the large tent. Miss Sewall," turning toward Jennie, "I know a delightfully shady spot, a little apart from the crowd, but from which the scene is most charming. Will you go there with me, and rest a while?"

Miss Sewall gravely took his arm, and they disappeared in the shrubbery; while Elizabeth looked after them, the picture of dismay.

"Oh! devoted to Miss Sewall, is he?" said Lou Preble, who was speedily made acquainted with the state of things, with a little spiteful laugh. "And what airs she does assume because he deigns to make a fool of her with his flattering attentions."

"I think nature anticipated her there," said Elizabeth warmly. "She does n't exhibit the least gratitude to us for noticing her, but, instead of that, has the air of doing us an honor in coming to our party. I wish, with all my heart, I had n't invited her."

"I wondered very much at your doing so," said Lou; "but do let's have a little fun out of the flirtation ourselves, Elizabeth. Let us write her a tender little note, imitating John's hand (I can do it perfectly), and signing it with his name. Let us tell her that she is an adorable being, and ask her if she will go to drive at the witching hour of twilight on a certain day."

"Oh!" said Elizabeth, drawing a long breath, at the audacity of the thing. "I

should never dare to do it in the world. John would surely find us out, and how dreadfully angry he would be. It would be great fun, but I am afraid not quite honorable."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Preble. "It is always honorable to have a little fun, and I don't think he would suspect us at all. The Wentworth boys, your cousins, are always in mischief up to their ears, and I heard them teasing him about the girl this morning. He will think at once that they had something to do with it. We are both of us perfectly well able to carry it out, Elizabeth. If he should speak to me concerning the letter, I could look as unconscious and innocent as possible, and deny that I had any knowledge of it, with perfect unconcern. It is n't at all likely that he would do so, however."

"But that would not be right," said Elizabeth, "and if John should find us out he would never forgive us."

"Why, how seriously you take matters, Elizabeth. It is only for a joke that we do it, anyway, and some time we shall confess, certainly. I shall confess when the girl leaves town, and he has forgotten his fancy for her."

"Well," said Elizabeth, after a good deal more parley, "you may do it if you like, and I will not betray you; but, really, I could not write the note myself. I should look so guilty if John spoke to me about it. I'm half afraid of him, you know. I always was."

"I know you are; but, fortunately, I am not, and I am not at all afraid to write the note. Oh, it will be such fun! She will return a favorable answer, of course."

Accordingly, when the guests had all taken their departure that night, and Lou and Elizabeth were cozily closeted up-stairs (Lou was to remain over night with her friend), the fateful deed was done.

"Did he leave her side once during the whole evening?" said Elizabeth. "I was obliged to pay some attention to my guests, especially as he was so neglectful of his duty, and was unable to keep my eye on the precious pair."

"Hardly," said Lou; "though of course he danced with me two or three times. I pretended that I had not noticed his flirtation at all."

"I wish I could be sure that it would only be a flirtation," said Elizabeth. "Mam-

ma feels just as you do about it, but I am afraid. It is n't like John to go on in this way."

Miss Lou opened her black eyes very wide. How could any one harbor such a fear for a moment? She, who not only belonged to an old Willoughby family, but was the richest heiress in the county, and handsome,—acknowledged to be handsome and very stylish into the bargain, was encouraging his attentions. Indeed, there had been a sort of engagement made between them by their families when they were children. Of course John understood that he was to marry her, and because of this understanding he felt more at liberty to pay a little attention to a forlorn stranger.

"How can you be so foolish, Elizabeth?" said she. "John is kind-hearted, he makes a fool of himself, to be sure; but I am positive that he never will wish to marry that dowdy little gypsy. What an absurd costume she wore tonight. But then, of course, she is poverty-stricken and knows nothing of respectable society."

It was a work of time to compose the wonderful note, and then to write it in imitation of John's rather peculiar, lawyer-like hand, required no small amount of time and care. It was not finished until toward the time for sunrising, but was pronounced a masterpiece. It ran thus:—

"MY ANGEL,—Your adorable countenance has haunted me ever since last night. I must look in those beautiful eyes again very soon, hear that sweetest voice. Will you indulge me in the bliss of driving with you on Thursday at twilight? If so, I will come for you at seven o'clock precisely. Please let me hear from you soon, and O my angel, do not, I beseech of you, say no to

"Your humble servant

"And devoted admirer,

"J. PERCIVAL."

Miss Preble posted the letter herself, but was very careful not to be seen when she dropped it into the box outside the post-office door. That box was seldom used, but sometimes a business man in a great hurry or a shy lover would drop a letter therein, and it had been opened regularly. But now weeks and weeks had passed since anything had been found in it, and the postman had grown careless and neglected to look into it more than once a day. So

the letter addressed to Miss Jennie Sewall was not mailed until the next night. However, it would have made no difference if it had been mailed and delivered at once, for Miss Sewall and Jennie went on a shopping trip to the city that morning and did not return until the next afternoon. As it happened, Mr. Percival went to the city also on Tuesday morning, and they all returned together in the afternoon train. They happened to meet at the station; and he thought it was the most delightful trip he had ever made in his life, and wished that it only might last hours longer if not forever, in spite of the noise and dust. Jennie liked it, too, and thought that in spite of what her aunt said about the haughtiness of the family and the airs of Miss Elizabeth, he was the most charming young gentleman she had ever met. He asked permission to call upon her immediately, indeed he had done so on the night of the lawn party, and she had granted his request, not eagerly, but with a gracious dignity which he considered very fascinating.

They reached Willoughby quite early, and as it was an especially beautiful evening, with a rich-colored sunset sky which lasted until after the moon rose, and a perfumed breeze which made the elm-shadowed streets deliciously cool and sweet, it suddenly occurred to him to have his favorite steed Selim harnessed, and go and invite Miss Sewall to drive with him. She had expressed a wish to go round to the other side of Sunset Hill; and when would there be a better opportunity? It would be nothing more than a suitable attention to a stranger in the town, and of course she would accept the invitation in the right spirit, as it was evident that she was a very sensible as well as a very lovely girl. Miss Sewall was in the garden when he reached her aunt's house, and greeted him with no small degree of dignity. Mr. Percival was not only chilled but astonished, her manner was so changed from the cordial friendliness of three short hours ago.

"I have only just received your note, Mr. Percival," she said, with a haughty inclination of her stately little head, "and, consequently, there was no time to write and decline your invitation." And she was about to turn on her heel with a frigid good-evening, when Mr. Percival, the image of astonishment, exclaimed, —

"My note! Miss Sewall, I cannot imag-

ine what you mean. Pardon me, but there must be some mistake."

"Did you not write me a note inviting me to go to drive with you, Mr. Percival?" said she, gazing straight into his eyes, but becoming suddenly scarlet with amazement and confusion.

"No, Miss Sewall, I came to ask you to drive with me, but I certainly have written you no note."

"Then what can be the meaning of this?" and she drew the precious missive from her pocket, and gave it into his hands.

He read it while all sorts of expressions flitted over his face.

"I don't wonder you were going to decline the invitation, but this is the first time I have ever seen this wonderful composition. How could you believe for one moment that I had written anything so presuming?"

"How could I help believing it?" said she with trembling lips. "It is certainly signed with your name, and who would wish to perpetrate such an atrocious fraud? What could his or her motive be?"

"Do you not believe me when I say that I did not write it, Miss Sewall?"

"Certainly, I believe you, I did not dream of doubting your word, but it is very strange."

"I think I know the author of the delicate and charming joke, but will you not forget it now, and accept the invitation which I come to bring you? It is a lovely evening to drive, and you said that you had a great desire to see the other side of Sunset Hill."

Jennie hesitated at first, but he soon succeeded in changing her mind on the subject. He had no need to entreat like the anxious lover in the song, "Oh, tell me how to woo thee, dear," he seemed to understand her perfectly, and in spite of her determination never, never to marry into a family which looked down upon her, she could not resist his manly, straightforward and altogether modest way of coming to the point.

"I should not have spoken so soon," said he in the course of the evening, "though I

have been determined to win you if possible from the first, if it were not for this mysterious affair. The person who wrote the note must have known my mind. I should not have dared to call you my angel, but, nevertheless, I have known that you were inexpressibly dear to me. Will you try to care for me, Jennie? Do you think you ever could care for me as a wife should for her husband?"

"But your mother, — your sister," faltered Jennie, who was sure that she could care for him, but shrank from a closer acquaintance even with his family.

"I do not ask you to marry them, but I am very sure they will be fond of you when they really know you. That need make very little difference to you, however, for I do not intend to live in Willoughby. I am tired of the dull old town, with its sleepy, aristocratic atmosphere and narrow-minded prejudices."

The next day he had the pleasure of announcing his engagement to his mother and sister. Mrs. Percival, who had set her heart upon Lou Preble for a daughter-in-law, was at first very indignant, but finally resolved to make the best of it, as it was of no use to oppose John. Afterward, she was delighted with the match, for it turned out that Jennie, on her mother's side, belonged to one of the oldest and most aristocratic families in Massachusetts, and was a favorite member of the same.

As for Elizabeth, she declared herself delighted with the prospect of having Jennie for a sister, at once; but John, who regarded her rather searchingly, did not receive her congratulations with much warmth.

Lou Preble was the perfect picture of chagrin and amazement when she heard the news, but made it a point to call on Jennie very soon, and was extremely sweet and friendly. Nothing was ever said concerning the note, only when Lou congratulated John, he regarded her with a look full of sarcastic meaning, and replied mysteriously that he had been the victim of a very successful joke!

A USEFUL GHOST.

Dupee, Louise

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A USEFUL GHOST.

BY LOUISE DUPEE.

All the family, with the exception of Jennie, were seated in the great cheery kitchen. Tomorrow was Saturday, and Mrs. Cobb was paring apples in anticipation of tomorrow's baking.

"Where's Jennie?" asked that lady at length. "I want her to help me. She is n't good for much of anything these days. If 't a'n't singin'-school night, why, it's a gettin' ready for singin'-school night, or hev'n' company, or somethin' or other."

"She's in the front room, a lightin' up," replied Bob, who was a regular store-house of useful knowledge. "I heard 'em say in the store how her beau was a-comin' over from Rockville tonight."

"Her beau!" exclaimed Mrs. Cobb,

aghast: "Why, John Prendergrast's her beau, if she's got one. He's bin a goin' with her ever sence they was children; but she don't light up the front room for him, and he don't live over to Rockville neither. It can't be that she's asked that good-for-nothin', finified Frank Waters over, with his perfumery a smellin' up the whole neighborhood, and his drawlin' voice and power of manners. If she hez, she won't never do it again, — never."

And the excited lady threw her apples into the waste-basket, and carefully saved the parings.

"Now, ma," said prudent Pa Cobb over the farmers' almanac, "you jest let Jennie alone, and it 'll come out all right. Ef you

go to meddlin', you 'll only make bad matters worse. Keep still a while, and let her go her own goes; and, ef John a'n't a bigger fool 'n I think he is, he 'll keep still too, and bide his time."

And Pa Cobb finally had his way; and restless Jennie, who soon appeared with a look of not altogether pleased expectation in her pretty face, was allowed to remain unquestioned while the apple-parings dropped swiftly from her impatient, nervous little fingers.

In the course of fifteen minutes, John Prendergrast walked in at the back door, unannounced, as was his usual custom. Jennie looked decidedly taken aback; for, as he had spent the evening before at the Cobb fireside, it would hardly be expected that he would come again so soon.

"Want another hand at your apples, Mrs. Cobb?" said the young man in a hearty, ringing voice, that was pleasant to hear.

"No, thank you: they're most done now. But you're always welcome as the sun, John: you know that."

John looked at Jennie as if he wished to hear this sentiment confirmed in that direction.

But she did not look up. In fact, she had been staring very hard at a red-cheeked Baldwin ever since he came in.

Then there was a ring at the front-door bell; at which every one seemed startled, for the sound of that bell was a rare occurrence. The minister rang it sometimes when he came to call, and ladies from far-away neighborhoods when they came to the sewing circle. Otherwise it was silent. The hired man looked in from the back room, his eyes open to their widest extent; the baby woke, and contributed fierce cries to the general excitement; and the children stood on their heads with expectation. Jennie colored to the roots of her hair, and hastened away to answer the bell; while the hired girl stole down two or three steps of the front stairs to listen.

"Go in, John," said Mrs. Cobb, indicating the door with her eyes: "there 's somebody in the front room 't wants to see you."

John looked bewildered, but did not stir. Pa Cobb placidly read his almanac.

"I shall esteem it a great favor if you will go in, John," continued Mrs. Cobb solemnly.

John accordingly rose, and obeyed her re-

quest, without the least suspicion what or whom he was going to encounter.

Frank Waters, the dainty clerk in the variety store at Rockville Corner, sat very cozily in an arm-chair at no great distance from Jennie, who was blushing and looking very conscious. The atmosphere was filled with the mingled perfumes of hair-oil and patchouly. The room was "fixed up" very carefully too: John noticed that. The melodeon was open, and on the rack was placed the tender ballad of "Maggie Darling." A vase with one of Grandma Prescott's monthly roses in it adorned the centre-table; and the bright worsted tidy, through whose intricate meshes he had watched Jennie's pretty fingers through several blissful evenings, was finished and spread in all its glory over the arm of the sofa.

"Ah! good-evening, Mr. — Mr. — I've forgotten the name; weally," said Mr. Waters condescendingly, and imitating successfully the manner of a summer boarder who had excited his envy and admiration last season because he had pleased the young ladies even more than he himself had the honor of doing.

"Prendergrast," said Jennie, with a confused tongue.

"Ah, yes! Prendergrast. I have had the pleasure of serving you in my establishment, I believe, Mr. Prendergrast."

"I sometimes go over to Mr. White's store," said John stiffly, but not without a little flicker of amusement in his eyes, in spite of the horrible jealousy which was raging in his breast.

Mr. Waters winced a little, and the two sat glaring at each other in silence for some moments.

Jennie cast a little indignant glance at John, and broke the silence before it became quite unendurable, by asking Mr. Waters if he thought it was likely to storm tomorrow.

"Well, weally, Miss Jennie," he replied, "I'm a weal poor weather-wise. You'd better ask Mr. — ah — Mr. Prendergrast: he 's out-doors so much, a diggin' potatoes and a hoein' cabbages, that probably he gits used to the looks of the sky. Anyhow, we don't care what the weather is tomorrow, if it clears off Thursday in time for our dance, do we?"

John was furious; not at the fling against his occupation, but that he should dare to

use the word "we," in connection with Jennie and himself, with such amazing coolness and confidence. He dared not trust himself to speak for some time, and was obliged to hold himself into his seat, so strong was his impulse to seize Mr. Waters by his collar, and throw him out-of-doors.

It was Jennie's turn to be angry with Mr. Waters now; and she turned to John with a smile of great sweetness, and ignored her other admirer.

Mr. Waters, with a great deal of quickness, then commenced to shower down politeness upon the head of his enemy, and was pleasantly apologetic.

John continued to be savage, however, and made himself so disagreeable that Jennie finally turned her back upon him completely, and she and Mr. Waters had the conversation entirely to themselves.

John sat with the aspect of a revengeful robber for a few moments, and then sulkily left the room. He was about to leave the house, when Mrs. Cobb called to him to return.

"John," said she breathlessly, "pa has gone to bed, and I want to have a talk with you. Don't you think Bob heard that Jennie promised to go over to Rockville to the dance Thursday night with that puppy of a Waters, and I want you to help me put a stop to it. Pa says, 'Oh, you let Jennie alone, and it'll come out all right;' and I've no doubt but what it would if I could hev patience to set still and see a child of mine make a fool of herself. You see how it is. He 's heard of her inheritin' her Aunt Field's property, and she 's a pooty girl too, and looks well to go round with; but, if she was as humbly as sin, he 'd want to git her jest as bad, so he could be supported in idleness, and set in the store and wear his best clo'es every day. And she 's taken a little fancy to him jest because he 's new, and knows how to say soft things, and is so mighty perlitte and attentive, and has such white hands, and all the other girls are so in love with him. They say he 's the best dancer 't ever took a step in this part of the country, and that goes a good ways with girls before they git over their folly. But I won't hev him hangin' round here; and, if you 'll help me put a stop to it, why, we 'll do it right straight off."

"I don't know what I can do about it," said John gloomily.

"Well, I 'll tell you," said Mrs. Cobb. "Did you know that the turnpike bridge was broken?"

"Why, yes," said John, looking somewhat horrified, as if he thought the lady was contemplating murder.

"And the only way that a body can git over from Rockville now is through the old road, that is kinder pokerish, and runs through that awful dark piece of woods, where the peddler was murdered when gran'-pa was a boy."

John looked more and more mystified.

"I always go that way when I have an errand at Rockville," said he, "it is so much shorter."

"So does 'most everybody, but not Mr. Waters. Seth, our hired man, used to live over to his uncle's; and this Frank was there, and he says he 's the biggest coward he ever seed in all his born days, and, no matter how much of a hurry he 's in, he goes 'way round the other road when he comes over this way, for fear of seein' the ghost. They say there is a ghost there, you know: old Daddy Jenkins saw it once, and so did Mis' Ethan Grindle when she was drivin' home from the store alohe. Now, when Thursday night comes, I want you to dress up in a sheet, — I 'll help you rig, — and then drive over, 'n hide in them woods, and, when Waters comes along on his way to git Jennie, you just appear in the road, and he won't dare to go past you any more 'n 's if you held out a pistol, and said, 'Your money or your life.'"

John laughed, but could not at first be brought to see the wisdom of the plan.

"What if Jennie really likes him, after all?" said he, a flush of pain passing over his face. "And then she will be disappointed about the dance. Everybody is going."

"You can go with her, yourself, afterward. You can git home in plenty of time. John, I 'm determined that you shall go, for my sake if not for your own. I know whether she likes him or not; and I know who she does like, in the bottom of her heart."

And John finally consented to assume the character of a ghost, and obstruct the way of Mr. Frank Waters on the road to his lady-love in the shades of Thursday evening.

Thursday evening came, — moonless, but with plenty of starlight, and a weird wind

moaning in the tree-tops. It was cold too, and the window-panes were covered with frost.

Jennie, quite surprised that her mother made no objection to her going to the dance with Mr. Waters, and prepared to rebel should she be moved to do so at the last moment, was all equipped at an early hour, and looking her very prettiest.

Bob came in with news of what Tilly Johnson was going to wear, and declared that none of the fellows in the store could find out what girl John Prendergrast was going to take; but it was known to a certainty that he was going, and he'd thought a new team yesterday "up to the port, — a reg'lar stunner, the best one in the county," Joe Judson said.

John going to take another girl! Jennie felt a sudden pang of jealous indignation at the very thought of it. But, then, what could she expect, since she was going with another man? But he might have asked her to go before Frank Waters did; and she would have accepted the invitation — perhaps. She had supposed he was n't going to the Rockville dances, because he said once that he did n't like the set. He was growing so stupidly particular lately; and then he was n't nearly as stylish as Mr. Waters, — not near as nice to go to dances with, any way. He could go with whom he pleased.

This was her train of thought; but still she did not look particularly happy as she sat by the fireside, waiting for her own escort.

Her mother's behaviour puzzled her. She seemed exceedingly nettled and nervous, and was mysteriously absent for some time, keeping the supper waiting, and not even Bob was able to find out where she had gone. When she returned, she seemed in amazingly high spirits, and was still continually indulging in little bursts of laughter, though the cause of her merriment was unknown to the rest of the family.

"Can it be that she is so pleased that I am going to the dance with Frank Waters?" thought Jennie. "I thought she adored John, and fairly hated Frank."

Whereupon Jennie, with the perversity of her sex, began to wish that she was not going with Frank, after all, but had waited a little longer for John to ask her.

The dance, after the staid country fashion, was to begin at eight o'clock; and Mr.

Waters was to come for Jennie at a quarter before seven, as it was a long ride to Rockville Corner. But now it was fully seven, and he had not yet made his appearance. Jennie was growing impatient, and peered poutingly out of the window. Another half-hour passed, and still he did not appear. Jennie tore up-stairs, and was about to remove her things, when she concluded to wait a while longer, as there was a sound of carriage-wheels in the distance.

"He's a comin', I guess, Jen," shouted Bob from the foot of the stairs; "but catch me to go to a dance with a feller 't could n't keep up to time."

Jennie waited anxiously. The carriage stopped in front of the house; but there was no ring of the door-bell. A quick step came up the walk to the back door, and in a moment John's voice was heard from the kitchen.

"Jennie gone to the dance?" she heard him ask in his loud, cheery tone.

"No, she ha' n't," replied Bob.

And for once he had the wisdom to hold his tongue after giving this information.

"Indeed! Why, I was pretty sure she was going, or I'd have asked her myself. Where is she? Can I see her?"

"Jen, there's somebody down here wants to see you," screamed Bob. "Come down 's quick 's you can, 'cause he's in a awful hurry."

Jennie went down, — she could not do otherwise, — but looking extremely crest-fallen and mortified.

"John's ben askin' me to go over to the dance with him, seein' 's he thought you was goin' with somebody else," said her mother, with the same wonderful disposition to laugh; "but, now he's found out his mistake, he'd rather hev you, by a long chalk, I'm sure."

"Will you go, Jennie?" inquired John gravely.

Jennie looked ready to burst into tears.

"You're very good to ask me, under the circumstances, John; but" —

"Ob, no 'buts,'" said John, feeling rather guilty and uncomfortable, in spite of himself. "Come: let us hurry. You are all dressed, and my pony will take us over in a twinkling."

And, after a few tears and a few doubts, Jennie consented. Anything rather than have the other girls think she was obliged to stay at home because she could get no

one to take her to the dance, she thought. And, after all, she was glad she was going with John.

While she was engaged in putting on her wraps, Mrs. Cobb, nearly doubled up with laughter, took John aside.

"I know you succeeded," she said; "but do tell me about it, for I 'm dyin' to hear how the silly coward acted."

"Oh, I stood directly in the middle of the road, wrapped in my sheet, and with the white paint on my face; and, when he come in sight, I lifted a threatening finger toward him. He stopped as suddenly as you please when he caught sight of me, and I waved him back in as ghostly and dreadful a manner as possible. Then, without making an effort to come any nearer, he turned his team, and drove away like mad. I really thought he would try to pass me," added John earnestly.

Mrs. Cobb shrieked with laughter; but John looked somewhat disturbed.

"I waited some time, thinking he would get some one to accompany him over the dangerous ground, and appear again," he continued: "but I think he was pretty well frightened; for he seemed to have no control over his horse in turning, and came near tipping over."

"Was there ever anything so 'cute?" said Mrs. Cobb, clapping her hands. "I declare! I believe I must tell pa, whether he scolds me or not. You did look awful, though, John."

"I can't help feeling that it was not exactly the right sort of trick," said John; "and I 'm going to confess to Jennie when I" —

"If you do," she threatened. "I'll!" —

But just then Jennie appeared, and so of course nothing more could be said.

The dance was the greatest success of the season, and even the girls themselves agreed that Jennie was the belle. But she made it a point to dance a good many dances with John, and only one with any other gentleman. Mr. Waters was not there.

When the bridge on the other road was ready for travel again, however, he came over to see Jennie, and was full of explanations and apologies; but she sent him away in a most hopeless condition.

Six months afterward she was married to John. He had confessed, and had been pardoned.

Jennie hated a coward. Then she had never cared for any one but the lover of her childhood; but she had seen him so constantly that she did not know it until that little affair with Frank Waters.

The story that the ghost had appeared again was spread far and wide. The village grandmothers talked the murder over again by the fireside nearly every evening; and the village children did not sleep at night, for fear, after these thrilling tales.

But the ghost has been quiet and never once shown himself since the night of the dance at Rockville Corner.

A LIFE LOST, AND A LIFE WON.

BY AMANDA M. HALE.

[No. 1. — COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

A sail-boat drifting slowly up the bay, waiting for the lingering wind, — the wind which tarried so long that for a whole hour the boat had been off the town, outlined against the rosy east, her loosely hanging canvas throwing deep shadows upon the burnished waves that rippled around the prow, — this was the picture seen from shore, as motionless and beautiful as if it were indeed a picture. But the two persons in the boat — perhaps I should say three, for though one was a dog, he had a marked individuality of his own — were in no haste; vacation had just begun, and so long as it lasted, life had no tomorrow. To Paul Barron this was the whole realization of his whole summer dream; even so far back as the early April days, he had been beset by longings for sweet country air, and sights, and sounds; the sea winds and tossing waves wooed him, and the low ground-swell of the breakers had made the music of many a delicious day-dream.

The *dolce far niente* was now his own. He might lie all night by the shore, and watch the stars go out, and morning come up the east; he might dream and doze under the golden moon, and no intrusive breakfast-bell should rudely break the chain of his fancies, no imperious summons to labor should disorient him, for though his brush was idle, he was storing up pictures in his brain; rich or poor, obscure or distinguished, it was all one now. With his splendid, healthy physique, and his keen sense of enjoyment, empty pockets were a joke.

Off from the shore came the sweet sound of the evening bells, the merry clamor of children at their play, and all the inartic-

ulate murmur of the town, subdued and soft. The sunset glow lay golden on the water, and on the tall white houses of the village, and on the round green hills beyond it. The long, curved peninsular which swept around the bay was a gleaming belt of ships went silently, one by one, fading of yellow fire; far over the sea, that stretched away into the innumerable distance, a fleet like phantoms in the misty space.

And so for another hour, till the yellow light grew cold and gray, and the white houses vanished, and the children's voices were still, and the waste of waters was dim and dark; and then Vale Amber, whose humor had chimed in with his friend's, from an impulse of his impressible nature, awoke suddenly to a consciousness of his own *ego*: he found that he was still susceptible to the cold, and that he remembered an appetite among his possessions.

As Vale rose, the huge Newfoundland mastiff, sympathizing with his master, rose too, and went sniffing about Paul Barron's face. That gentleman assumed an erect position immediately.

"Excuse me, Romeo, but, really, though I'm fond of caresses, I have some choice as to their quality. Vale, did you set that dog on me?"

"Not I. You awoke just in time, though."

"Awoke! Do you mean to accuse me of having been asleep? Sleep is a necessary evil, at best; it does well enough in town, where there's no reason for keeping awake: but I intend to ignore it in vacation."

"*Tres bien!*" The accent was perfect, and betrayed Vale's French descent at once. "I suppose you mean to dispense with breakfast, dinner and supper also. Just as you please, only don't expect me to follow your example. I live by eating, at present."

"Only a habit, Vale. Man is a creature of habit."

"Yes—I know; and force of habit makes me feel as though a cup or two of coffee, and a nice oyster soup, with a few biscuit, would just suit my present condition."

Paul tossed away the flowing hair—Vale called it his mane—from his temples, and looked extremely satisfied.

You do draw an enchanting picture. But one must take trouble to get all these things."

"Not at all! Only take the oars." Paul made a grimace. "No matter, though," cried Vale. "Here's a flaw that will take us to port in ten minutes."

Paul rose to trim the sail, and in the act, martial bearing, were in strong contrast to his fine, stalwart shape, breadth of shoulders, Vale, small and slight, and more graceful and elegant than manly. They rounded a point, and swept into a rocky cove. The gray shadows of night were on the shore, but Paul could make out the outlines of a house set close down on the cliffs, where the tides at their greatest height must wash its walls. Presently a light shone out of a long, narrow aperture, more like a loophole in a feudal fortress than a modern window. In a moment the boat ran alongside the rude stone wharf, and Vale sprang ashore.

"Behold my castle! Back with you, Romeo! Don't you understand etiquette? Paul, let me welcome you to Castle Indolence, alias Monastery."

Paul salaamed low in return, a stately acknowledgment quite lost in the darkness. But now a lantern appeared, slowly moving down the rocky pathway, without any visible means of support. It drew nearer, and presently Paul perceived that the torch-bearer was a tall Ethiop, of a blackness that seemed to absorb all the light around, nothing white about him, except the whites of his eyes, which rolled about in an extraordinary manner, as if aware that it was rather hard upon them to have to illuminate such a surprising amount of darkness.

"Erebus! Is this one of the genii of the place?"

And Paul shrugged his shoulders, as this son of Ham came up. But Vale called out, —

"Hollo, Octo! how are you?"

"So it am you, Massa Vale? I'd took de dory and come off to you, ef I'd know

'twas you for sure," said the negro, smiling and bowing.

"No matter, Octo. Paul, this is my man Friday, otherwise October. Octo, this is Paul Barron, a fellow so tired of idleness that he is eager to go about almost any kind of work. You can set him to mend your nets, repair sails, calk the boats, dig clams—he'd rather do anything than be idle."

October showed his appreciation, by rolling his eyes all over Paul's figure, and grinning in silence.

"October," said Paul, gravely, as they walked up to the house, "you are as old as Vale and I together, but there's one thing I'm afraid you don't know."

"What's dat, massa?"

"That your master is a great storyteller."

October gave a sidelong glance at Vale.

"Spect Massa Vale's stories mostly goes by contraries."

"For example," pursued Paul, "he told me you had eleven brothers and sisters, named January, February, and so on, through the year."

Vale turned upon his friend with such a look of surprise, that October felt justified in exclaiming, —

"O my! what a bouncer!"

"And he tried to make me believe that you would have a repast prepared for us, of Fairhaven oysters, fruits from the Orient, wines from the Mediterranean, and, more than all, a sable Hebe to wait upon us."

"Don't know about dat last. Dere a'n't no women folks about here."

They went laughing into the house, threw their traps in a corner, and sat down to supper, very unpoetically hungry. But an hour afterward, they were sitting upon the broad, flat rock at the door, looking seaward.

The moon rose over the sea, and marked out a golden highway over the waves, which led up to their very feet. Across the marshes, the lights of the town shone out; the sky was blue and clear, the stars pale in the great glory of the moon; pleasant sounds came to them, — the chirping of the birds in the pine thickets further up the shore, singing in their dreams, the swash of the waves along the sands, and their low gurgle as they retired from the hundred rocky inlets along the coast.

"And so this rocky demesne was Neptune's legacy to you?"

Vale blew along coil of smoke into the air and said, —

‘It is n’t mine yet. To be sure I’m in possession, — nine points in the law, — but Neptune holds his own still.’

‘By the way, whom does Neptune represent in this particular case?’

‘Captain Marmaduke Amber, at your service, at present cruising somewhere among the Indies, while his unworthy *protege* and adopted son enjoys his patrimony.’

‘Very considerate of the captain. Your story is an odd one, is n’t it, Vale? You’ve never told it to me!’

‘No. I like bygones to be bygones. But you may know if you like. The captain picked me up at Barbadoes,’ said Vale, carelessly.

‘How did that happen?’

‘Why, it seems my father fell into a quarrel with some of his jolly friends, and thought to save his honor by setting himself up as a target for the fellow who insulted him, which might have done very well if he had not had the misfortune to be hit, — killed outright, in fact. The rascals who were concerned in the affair fled, and my father’s burial was left to the chance kindness of strangers.’

‘And you? Were you with him?’

‘It seems so. My father was known there under two or three aliases, and it was surmised that he was an officer in the French service; but nobody knew, and those who could have told ran away to save their own precious heads. *Entre nous*, I have a strong suspicion that he was a villain, — especially as it did n’t appear that his son had any mother. Well, Captain Amber brought me home with him, was good enough to give me his name, as I had n’t any of my own, — except Vale, which I imagine was a nickname, or a diminutive, or something of that sort, — and he — and somebody else — did all they could to keep me from going straight to the devil, which was my natural bent;’ and Vale laughed, a strange laugh, half mockery, half pain, — a sound strangely discordant with the sweet, calm beauty of the summer night.

‘That is as you choose, Vale,’ said Paul.

‘No, it is n’t. I started the wrong way.’

‘Turn back, then; begin over again.’

‘I can’t. Mephistopheles and I have made a bargain, and I must keep my part of it.’

‘Nonsense! Are you so miserably weak that you can’t resist the horde of petty vices that are dragging you down to perdition? Go to work in earnest. God helps those who help themselves.’

Vale started. A change crossed his dark, mobile face.

‘Yes. Margaret says so.’

‘Margaret?’

‘Margaret Amber, the captain’s niece.’

‘Margaret Amber!’

Paul said it over, lingering on the syllables, conscious of their flowing music. But he had never seen her. The words suggested no picture of sweet, womanly beauty, gave no hint of the power they should afterward be in his life, did not thrill along his nerves, as they did a thousand times afterward. But after a little while, he said, following out a chain of thought, of which they perhaps were the first link, —

‘Vale, there is one thing that would save you?’

‘What is that? I’m open to conviction. I take a warm interest in my conversion,’ said Vale gayly.

‘To love some true woman.’

‘No, it would n’t.’

The words were said with such bitter emphasis, that Paul Barron started.

‘How do you know it would n’t?’

‘Because I’ve tried it. I tell you, Paul, the original depravity is too strong to be overcome by such means.’

‘Well, it would depend upon the woman whom —’

Vale interrupted, with passionate emotion.

‘The woman is like one of God’s angels. Knowing her, I know what heaven is. But don’t let’s talk of her. Now, Paul,’ and Vale’s dark face gleamed with a grim horror as he spoke, ‘I know I’m a rough subject, and I never decline any means of grace. When I’m preached at and prayed for, I say, “Go on, old fellow, I wish you success.” But, *ciel!* it’s of no use! It glances off my petrified heart, as the rhinoceros’s skin turns the bullets. But there’s one thing I am susceptible to. When I see such goodness as yours or — that woman’s whom I told you about — I fall in love with it. As for imitating it it’s as natural for me to be wicked, as for water to run down hill. I’m sorry. If there was a machine that I could be run through, and come out a moral, well-principled man on the other

side, I'd submit to the process, if it broke every bone in my body. Don't laugh. It's no laughing matter to me to know that the door of heaven will be shut upon me, and she will be upon the inside."

The flexible, characteristic voice was suddenly silent; the darkness was around them, but Paul knew that this strange, mercurial, wayward nature had melted in tears. The minutes slipped by, but neither spoke again.

At last Paul got up, and stood a moment looking down at the man beside him, with grave, kind face.

"I've only one thing to say, Vale. If such poor goodness as mine moves you, there is a goodness that should draw you as the moon draws the tides. And now I'm going to that eery chamber you've given me. *Benedicite*, Vale;" and Paul's hand rested on Vale's clustering, black curls, with a touch whose kindness was in itself a blessing.

Then he was gone, and the great Newfoundland drew nearer his master, as if glad that there was no one to divide them, looking up into his face with eyes that were human in their love and faithfulness. Vale stroked his silky ears.

"Nobody loves me but you, old fellow. I don't believe Margaret" —

He broke off shortly. Then a wild wish sprang up in his heart, that he had been born a dog — anything, to have escaped the emotions and conflicts of a man. But if he must be human, why could he not have been like Paul? His tastes and habits were all pure and simple; he did n't mind being jeered at for Puritanism, and called Saint Paul, and he was the happiest man Vale knew. Vale could have cried with a passionate longing to be like him, not in the least knowing how, groping blindly in the dark, and missing the way, — missing it mostly because he had no real heart feeling of his need. For his admiration of goodness was an æsthetic perception, the involuntary tribute of the poetic side of his nature.

Presently Vale rose up, and went away toward the marshes, striking into a path which he seemed to know well, and following it straight across the long, level stretch of land, Romeo serenely trotting by his side. And as he went, his thoughts of Margaret were curiously mingled with speculations concerning Elsie Shannon, and that coveted *bonne bouche*, her fortune. He gave a pro-

longed whistle at last, as though his mind were made up.

"But I want to see Margaret," he said, with sudden vehemence.

CHAPTER II.

THE AMBER HOUSEHOLD.

The old Amber homestead fronted the straggling street of the little seaport town. It had been a famous house in its time, — the abode of colonial governors, and the scene of stately festivals upon the king's birthday. Grave councillors, in perukes and flowing wigs, and stately dames, in wonderful brocades of the scantiest breadth, and high-heeled, peaked slippers, had promenaded its parlors, or gone through the elaborate measures of a minuet. But the house had evidently fallen into the sere and yellow leaf. Its cornices were crumbling, its oaken beams bending under the weight of years, its staircases settling from the perpendicular, and its floors sloping away from the horizontal, in a manner never intended by the faithful builder. But, notwithstanding its infirmities, it still bore itself serenely above the smaller structures which the present century had planted beside it.

While Vale and his friend were steaming over the bay in the early sunrise, — Vale asleep in the cabin, and Paul Barron watching the red dawn from the deck, — the old Amber homestead was already awake. The windows of a room fronting the sea were thrown open, and Margaret Amber looked out, just as the sun swung above the horizon. The long, level rays shimmered across the waves, touched the leaves of the lindens that overhung the window, and lay among the bronze threads of Margaret's hair. Not a beautiful face, if you fancy vivid contrasts of color, and piquant, changeful expressions. The ivory whiteness of Margaret's complexion was untouched by any tint of rose; the bronze hair fell over her temples in drooping, wavy masses; the eyes were brown and steady, seeming to look into the very soul of things, large and clear, lighting with laughter, or growing soft and tender when the heart gave them a message. Her face was gentle and serious, not forever set in unmeaning smiles; but she had a keen sense of humor, and when a smile dimpled the sweet curve of her lips, it overran her eyes, and shone all over her

countenance. But in Margaret's life there had been more reason for tears than smiles, and she sighed now as she turned away from the window, thinking how nice a run on the beach would be, but remembering that breakfast was to be prepared. So she went down-stairs, and into the dining-room, a large apartment, and somewhat sombre, until Margaret opened the shutters, and let in the cheerful sunshine. Nobody else was there now, but old Phillis must have been in, for everything had that put-away and tidied-up look that indicated the late presence of some presiding household divinity.

Presently Margaret peeped out into the kitchen, and seeing a great roaring fire, and perceiving the odor of coffee and muffins, came back quite easy on the score of breakfast. Now, as she busied herself about the table, she was presently aware of a shining black face framed in among the roses by the window. Said face was smiling to the extent of its capacity.

"Why, October, is it you?" going toward the window. "Won't you come in?"

"No, I thank you, Miss Margaret, — I's berry busy, I is," said October, with the air of a man bearing heavy responsibilities.

"Bun, Octo? What is it about?"

"Why, you see, miss, Massa Vale's coming home pretty soon, — 'spects today, like erough; and I's got to buy de tings for de supper. He'll be mighty hungry, sure."

"Vale coming today?" her face brightening.

"Dat's so, miss. I tought I'd just stop and tell you, 'dough I's in a mighty hurry, I is."

"Thank you, October. I am very glad Vale is coming," said Margaret, with such a sunshiny face that October went away improvising a song which celebrated Margaret's praises in a manner at once original and fervid.

Margaret went back to her teacups, thinking how pleasant it would be to see Vale, for of all her early friends, no one understood her so well as Vale, and no one ever took such pains to make himself agreeable. Her grateful, appreciative heart had remained loyal all the year he had been away, and the news of his return thrilled her with a vivid pleasure.

And now the family came dropping in one by one, for in this house there was no special hour for anything; each person obeyed the dictates of his own sweet will, and

consequently it often happened that breakfast ran along through the whole forenoon, and finally merged into dinner; an arrangement, which, however delightful in the abstract, was rather annoying to such a nice little houskeeper as Margaret: but she had long ago found out that fretting would not mend matters, and was sure, in the end, to spoil one's temper; so she smiled serenely upon her stepmother, who came in just as the ponderous church-bell clanged nine.

A ripe, delicate, rosy, overgrown peach — that is my idea of Mrs. Amber. A fair, pink-and-white complexion, in spite of her forty years, blue eyes, and yellow, flossy hair, that curled up in charming little ringlets all around the edge of her pretty breakfast-cap; slow, languid movements, that accorded with her rather excessive *embonpoint*; and soft, white hands, so pulpy that you knew at once they could never have been swift in good works, or indeed works of any kind. Mrs. Amber's mind resembled her hands; there was a curious want of muscularity, a sort of mental flabbiness, so to speak. Her life had been one long holiday. It had always been understood among her friends, and persistently dwelt upon by herself, that her constitution was so frail, and her nervous susceptibilities so extreme, that the first attempt at exertion, or the slightest breeze of trouble, would quite annihilate her.

If anybody sets up petting themselves, I have always noticed that there are plenty of people who are ready to help in the work. This was Mrs. Amber's experience; and she had found it so delightful that she had gone through life thus far, softly bewailing her lot, and taking the intensest satisfaction in her general inefficiency and worthlessness. She had been a pretty, languishing belle in her girlhood, had married early, and been inordinately petted by her husband. It was such a delightful state of things; but unfortunately men are mortal, and Mr. Shannon had the indiscretion to die just when his affairs were in an entangled condition. Of course Mrs. Amber was perfectly happy in her new misery, and pitied and bemoaned herself, till all her friends were half heart-broken about her. Presently she met Mr. Amber. He condoled with the lovely widow, and did what he could to console her, by asking her to become Mrs. Amber. He was so good as to attend to the late Mr. Shannon's affairs, and it by and by appeared that a

hopeless speculation was after all to answer its first promise, and Mr. Amber, being a strictly high-minded and honorable man, invested the money for the sole use and behoof of Mrs. Amber's daughter Elsie. Mrs. Amber smiled sweetly upon him in return, and remarked that it would be a nice little *dot* for Elsie, though to be sure the dear child was a beauty, and would not need any extrinsic charms. It was really a pity it could n't be poor Margaret's, who was almost ugly, with her great eyes and pale skin. Mr. Amber must try to lay by something for Margaret.

Mr. Amber did try; but what with the amazing doctor's bills, and the constant attendance, and the thousand leaks in the neglected household, and the teething and nursing and schooling of Dick and Harry and Willie and Fred, who rushed upon this mundane sphere without the least consideration, and in prodigious haste, it was no use trying, and noble-hearted, gentle patient Mr. Amber dropped his heavy burden one day, leaving nothing but the great house and his blessing for his children.

While Mrs. Amber cried, and talked in her soft, plaintive way about not knowing what they were to do, Margaret took up the burden, and bore it bravely, — not without some grieving, and occasional wild longing for a careless, free life, like Elsie's.

Elsie conducts herself at breakfast as befits a beauty, and the heiress of a hundred thousand. A proud, spirited head, crowned by clustering curls of rich red gold, so abundant that they crowded around her forehead, and dropped over her cheeks, in spite of the jeweled arrows that sought to confine them. It was a dazzling face which this wonderful hair shaded, with its lambent, black eyes, and its ripe crimson of cheek and lip, — a face having a strange, peculiar charm, a nameless grace of its own, a haughty beauty, melting suddenly into sweetness, a wayward, saucy piquancy, that was always surprising you. That Elsie Shannon was an heiress, everybody knew; a good many suspected that she was wild and willful. She held her mother in contempt, and her step-sister Margaret in respect, which was all very proper, said the world, not knowing her cool indifference toward itself and its opinions.

"Vale is coming home today," said Margaret quietly.

Nobody but Mrs. St. Ives saw the quick

color in Elsie's face, and the sudden, eager interest in the drooping eyes, that just now found nothing worth their seeing.

"Vale coming?" said Mrs. Amber languidly. "But he has n't written us. How do you know, Margaret?"

"October was here this morning, and told me so."

"Dear me! such a surprise!" said Mrs. Amber, with an effort.

"I'm glad Vale's coming," announced Dick, as soon as a plethoric mouthful of bread and butter would permit. "I like Vale. He takes me out boating, and you ought to see him row."

"I imagine Vale will have something else to do, besides play with boys," said Elsie relentlessly.

Dick took up the gantlet at once.

"You don't know anything about it. He used to take me out boating every day last summer — me and Margeret — while you were at the mountains. Vale likes Margeret," added this *enfant terrible*.

Elsie crimsoned, and the sleepy eyes lit up with fire. Now, quarreling, though a delightful and improving pastime, is to be indulged only in the bosom of one's own family, and not by any means in the presence of company. So Mrs. Amber made a faint show of authority.

"Dick, be quiet. Don't you know you ought n't to talk so?"

"Why not? Is n't it true?"

Mrs. St. Ives's keen gray eyes were upon him.

"A very good reason, my dear, why you should n't say it. Few true things will bear to be said," said that lady sarcastically.

Elsie tossed her head.

"My dear Mrs. St. Ives, Dick is only a boy."

Dick fired up at this implied insult to his thirteen years.

"I don't care. I'd rather be a boy than a girl; for girls don't know anything, and they're always interfering with a fellow, just as Elsie is."

"Dick, my love," began Mrs. Amber feebly.

"I a'n't your love. Elsie is your love, and Elsie don't like it because ' said Vale liked Margeret."

"Margaret, what do you mean by letting that dreadful child go on so? — and you pretend to govern, — and my nerves are all of a flutter, and I shall have a miserable day, I

know I shall,—and all because of that dreadful boy," said Mrs. Amber, in her faint, half-crying way.

Margaret whispered a word to the dreadful boy, which sent him away from the room, coloring, and then said quietly,—

"Perhaps you had better have another cup of tea?"

"Tea!" said Mrs. Amber, in an aggrieved tone. "How can you suggest such a thing, Margaret, and my poor nerves all torn to pieces by this scene? I might take a powder, but — no, stay — they are all gone. On the whole, Margaret, I think you had better step down to the doctor's this morning, and ask him to come in some time today. I don't think I'm as well as usual. I felt miserably all day yesterday."

"But, mamma" —

"Now don't go to discussing the question. I do hate to have you say, 'But, mamma,' in that way. It's just your father's tone, exactly. Poor, dear man! he meant well, but he could n't understand such a peculiar constitution as mine. It wears me all out, I'm so susceptible to discordances. Now don't you think, Mrs. St. Ives, that it is trying, particularly where one is very frail?"

Mrs. St. Ives replied that it was doubtless annoying; it was far more agreeable to have one's own way; and under cover of the little chat that sprang up between them, Margaret slipped away on her errand for the doctor.

"Who is this Vale Amber, whose coming has created such a sensation?" asked Mrs. St. Ives, with a keen glance at Elsie.

The girl got up instantly, and left the room. Mrs. Amber sank into the depth of her easy-chair, and adjusted herself for a little bit of gossip, a relaxation to which her nerves were always equal.

"Oh, Vale Amber is a *protege* of Captain Amber, a delightful fellow, though Margaret always will have it that he is wild; but Margaret is puritanic in her notions."

Meanwhile Margaret was on her way to the doctor's, a little vexed at the errand itself, but glad to be out in the sweet sunshine. The village street was almost empty, for the busy people were at work, and the idlers found the hot June sun too bright for them. The large, old-fashioned houses along the way were mostly shut up and still; the turf around them was green and fresh, and the shadows under the fine old trees looked cool and tempting. Now and

then, through the openings, she caught glimpses of the harbor, and the wide sea outside, and by and by, coming down nearer the wharves, there was all the petty stir of a half-decayed old town.

The idle custom-house officers sat at their windows, and watched the passers-by. A dingy barge was unlading coal just at the foot of a cross street. A tiny sail-boat came up and moored at the wharf, and the mail-coach dashed through the town with a great deal of importance, and some dust. Margaret stopped at a tall house, standing behind two Lombardy poplars, recently cut, and looking, in their forlorn, abridged state, vastly like inverted superannuated brooms.

She went in at the door, and, the inner office door being ajar, she pushed it further open, without knocking. A huge, burly man, florid as to his face, good-natured and accessible, sat there in an arm-chair, his feet elevated a trifle higher than his head, and resting on a desk. If almost any one else had come in, Dr. Godfrey would have turned his head, with a pleasant "Good-morning," or "How do you do?" but somehow he felt instinctively that something more was due to Margaret Amber. So he laid aside the morning paper, took down his feet, and lifted himself up out of the arm-chair.

"How do you do, Miss Margaret? A fine day this. No one ill at your house, I hope?"

"Mrs. Amber would like to have you come in some time today, if you please," said Margaret, evading the answer.

"Oh! ah! Yes: I'll come in. Nothing serious, I suppose. Nerves! — singular susceptibility, — very! What's the news at your house, Miss Margaret?"

"Nothing. Oh, yes! Vale is coming home!" with a bright face.

"Vale Amber? Indeed! Glad to know it. A little fiery, but good stuff in him. Young folks will be young folks," and the doctor went on, with the vague idea that he was talking to Margaret about her lover.

Margaret slipped away rather hastily, almost resenting his speech as an impertinence.

Dr. Godfrey watched her fine, tall figure as she swept gracefully down the pavement.

"Now there's a girl to be proud of, — strong and true outside, and the tenderest heart in the world at the bottom;" and the doctor sighed, half regretting, old bachelor as he was, that there were no such women when he was young.

It was a queer place where Margaret next stopped. A dingy brown house, set close upon the main thoroughfare; the windows were full of odd collections of miscellaneous articles; there were shelves inside and a long counter. *Behind the counter sat a girl of four or five and twenty, though from her wan, haggard face, you might have guessed her to be twice that age. The forehead was pinched and sunken, and her cheeks hollow. Her black eyes had an unnatural brightness in them. When she moved, as she did to answer Margaret's greeting, one saw at once her great misfortune. The old enemy, disease, had tortured her poor body, bowed the young, strong shoulders, and made them unsightly and repulsive. But the pale, sal-low face brightened all over when Margaret went in, and she put up both her thin hands in the quick impulse of pleasure.*

"I'm thankful to see you, Miss Margaret. *You've come just when I wanted you. I'm just about worn out this morning.*"

Margaret went with her into the little room at the back of the shop, the feeble girl leaning on her strong, kind arm, and sinking down at last into the chair where Margaret had placed her with a face full of content.

"What is it, Dolly? Not any new trouble, I hope."

"Oh, no! but it's the worry of things, and *the not knowing what to do, and what is to become of us all. And then the little things fret me so, — the people coming in, and being hard to suit, and going away cross; and mother bustling about down-stairs, and making such a noise; and Kitty fussing and crying because she's shut up in the factory all day long, poor child! — and no end to it all but the grave.*"

And she broke down in a weak, plaintive sob.

There seemed nothing to be said, so Margaret opened the basket which she carried, and took out some wine and other delicacies. Then, with a readiness that proved her familiar with the place, she found a glass, and *made Dolly drink some of the wine, arranging her chair and moving around her with that tender care that is often more consoling than spoken sympathy. After a while she said, —*

"It's just because you are worse than usual, is it not? You have n't slept well for many nights; and" — glancing at a great pile of cotton shirts in a corner of the chintz

sofa — "you've been sewing much more than you ought."

"I made them all last week, and after all it is so little that I get for them."

The pale face grew still sadder, and the thin fingers clasped each other in a kind of mute appeal. Margaret was silent, oppressed with that sense of helplessness that the generous heart so often feels. At last she said, with a kind smile, "Times will brighten by and by. Kitty will go on with her singing and playing, and presently will be earning ever so much money."

"It's just Kitty that troubles me more than all the rest," said the girl.

"How?"

"*Because she is so impatient of our poor ways, and all the hard work and all the deprivations of life. And then I'm troubled about Ben King: he's so fond of Kitty, and I can't make out whether she likes him or no.*"

"But she is promised to him," said Margaret.

"I know, but sometimes she is so perverse, — I don't know what to make of the child; and poor Ben is ready to break his heart about her. *I sometimes think, Miss Margaret, that she's been led into loving some one else;*" and the girl gave her a keen look.

"That can hardly be, I think," said Margaret innocently.

Just here the shop door opened, and a little vision — a dainty, fairy-like creature — stood framed in by the shabby doorway. A small, exquisite head with a crown of shining, brown hair clustering in little rings around her forehead, a complexion that put you in mind of the arbutus blossoms, some large, soft, child-like eyes, blue as a summer sea, and lips of rosebud sweetness. The little vision lingered in the doorway, *one tiny foot half advanced.*

"Come, Kitty," called her sister.

Kitty came, — the roses in her cheeks deepening as she saw Margaret, — stepping forward in a freakish way like a naughty child half inclined to disobey. She threw down her little hat, and pushed back her rings of brown hair impatiently.

"Is it so warm, dear?"

"It is n't because it is warm," said Kitty petulantly.

Margaret rose, and opened the shabby, old-fashioned piano. Miss Kitty sauntered along toward the instrument with the air of

a victim about to be immolated. But she sat down upon the stool, and adjusted the folds of her sixpenny muslin with such a perfect imitation of the fine-lady manner that Margaret smiled. The little hand began to wander over the keys; such a childish, chubby little hand as it was! round, white, plump wrists, — a bracelet on one of them which would keep slipping down, and Kitty was constantly taking her hands off the keys to push it back in its place, and thus Margaret's eyes were drawn to the trinket. It was a curiously woven band of gold with a singular device in the centre — a small star and a serpent with glittering enamel eyes coiled around the rays. Margaret looked at it with a singular recollection of having seen it somewhere before, — long ago, and again later. But she could not remember when, and presently her thoughts came back to the strain Kitty was playing. She stood by her an hour, making the little fingers go back when they stumbled, and correcting every false note. By and by she asked her to sing. Such a voice as broke upon the still, shabby little room! Margaret listened without a word of praise while the child went over the song a second time. Then she said, "You will soon be beyond me, Kitty."

Kitty looked up, her face suddenly flushing. Then turning again to the instrument she began a passage from the Messiah. Margaret had heard it from the lips of great artists, but she was never so penetrated by a sense of its sweet, solemn power as now. The little room with its torn, red curtains, its faded carpet, and its outlook into the yard where the clothes were drying, was suddenly glorified. When the last breath was hushed, Kitty got off the stool, — Margaret looking at her all the time with a kind of reverent wonder. But now the spell was broken, and Dolly came from the corner of the sofa where she had been crying in a little ecstasy of joy at Kitty's great gift and of simple delight in the music; the mother came pattering up from the cellar kitchen and looked in, — a stout, commonplace body, with bare arms and a very wet apron. And so Margaret put on her bonnet to go, saying as she did so, "My Cousin Vale is coming home. He must hear you sing, Kitty."

"Mr. Amber!"

Dolly, looking on, caught the swift rush of color, the pallor following it and the trembling eagerness of her voice.

"Mr. Amber coming home!" and Kitty's

fluttering hand went, shoving the bracelet up and down.

"He used to admire your voice, you know," said Margaret, all unconscious. And then she went away wondering whether this creature with a complexion like a blush rose, and the violet eyes, had any conception of the worth of her great gift, — a power that might win men back from evil and lift them to the very gates of heaven; a power which allied the little thoughtless fairy to the angels.

Kitty was looking down the street after Margaret, wishing she could have a French muslin dress and a parasol, thinking it very hard that she should have to be working all day while other girls not half so pretty were flirting with countless beaux; and so going on to think of Vale Amber thoughts that made her cheeks like twin roses, the lovely violet eyes grew dreamy as if it were some castle in the air they were seeing, instead of the homely street and Ben King going home to dinner in his shirt-sleeves, and nodding at her from the other side of the way. It was very provoking to be called in to set the table, and Kitty went with a scowl on her face that scared all the sweet dimples away.

Margaret ran quickly up-stairs after getting home, and was giving her hair a hasty brushing — an elaborate toilet being out of the question with the dinner to put upon the table — when Mrs. St. Ives came rustling in, in all the glory of brocade and lace. There was an auriferous gleam about her that quite dazzled Margaret's eyes, and unpleasantly reminded her of Eldorado and Juggernaut hung with shining coins. There were gold rings on her fingers, drawing attention to the slender, patrician hand, broad, gold bracelets shining among the folds of lace about the wrists, a glittering chain with an infinity of charms, earrings and gleaming hair ornaments, and on her breast a brooch sparkling with gold and diamonds. Mrs. St. Ives sank into a chair, and surveyed Margaret. "My dear, what have you been about all this hot forenoon?" she asked.

"I've been giving a lesson to that little wonder of a girl that I told you about," she said.

"Disinterestedly benevolent as usual," said Mrs. St. Ives languidly. "But I can't even ask you anything about it. I've lost all my capacity for everything except being bored."

"Why, who has been tormenting you now?" laughed Margaret.

"Dr. Godfrey," with a shrug of the shoulders. "He came two mortal hours ago. I thought I would sit it out; but I was fairly driven off the field. And he stays to dinner too."

"I don't care," said Margaret gayly.

"No. It is take him whole or piece-meal in his powders and pills. It's as easy being choked to death at once as being strangled gradually. There are at least twenty different odors in the drawing-room. I detected aloes, peregoric, quinine!"

"Don't laugh at him," interposed Margaret, remembering the dreadful bill that had haunted her so many nights, and which the doctor at last sent back to her receipted in full, and the money, she had saved so painfully, returned. "He is very generous and kind, and I do think he has done Mrs. Amber good."

"Margaret, don't be silly! You know she would be perfectly wretched if she had n't something to moan about."

Margaret did not mind this, for one of the charms shining against the lustrous folds of Mrs. St. Ives's brocade caught her eye.

"What is it, child?"

"I was thinking—how very odd that device is."

"This? Oh, yes. It was designed by an old man," and Mrs. St. Ives's dark face grew darker. "There was a whole band of them; these little gold stars threaded along a twist of golden rope. Imagine how they must have shone on my hair when it was glossy and black, and I a bride. Imagine the white silk and the *tulle*. But they went afterward; for, do you see, there is a pure diamond in the centre, and diamonds are money, you know."

Margaret was silent, and Mrs. St. Ives rattled on with stories of her gay Parisian life, all slightly flavored with sarcasm.

And then there was the table to attend to, and a quarrel to be made up between Dick and Harry, and Elsie to be petted into good humor, and Dr. Godfrey to be welcomed. It was a charming tableau in the dining-room. Mrs. Amber with peachy cheeks and smiling eyes, as gay as though there were no such things as nerves in the world, Mrs. St. Ives stately and brilliant, Elsie's lovely face lighting up as her mother planned little festivals for Vale's visit, and Margaret in her serene, pure beauty.

The good-natured doctor was radiant. His roughness of manner and speech had dropped away, and he was become a *preux chevalier*—so tender—such a charming old-fashioned gallantry about him, "quite unlike anything one sees now-a-days," as Mrs. Amber remarked that night. The attraction which such feeble, inefficient women have for great burly fellows like the doctor is a curious psychological mystery. It will be hard to explain why the doctor went away at last, feeling twenty years younger than he did in the morning, and why he thought of Mrs. Amber all the evening and dreamed of her all night.

"He says I must have perfect repose, my vitality is so low," said Mrs. Amber; "and he won't consent to my making the slightest exertion." Margaret gave her the powder for the night, and went up-stairs thinking of the poor hunch-backed girl, who would sit far into the night working to keep the wolf from the door.

It was such a strange world, where one person's way lies all among roses, and another's over rough, stony places, with no rest by the way, and none to hope for till they reach the end of all.

CHAPTER III.

A QUESTION.

After crossing the marshes, Vale came into an orchard thickly set with gnarled, twisted old trees, and by and by into a quaint neglected garden, with the moonlight lying on the shrubbery, and full of the scent of roses. He stopped where a great linden-tree overswept the Amber house, and, passing around under its thick gloom, came to the front looking seaward. The wet sea-winds had been at work upon it, and the wall, shingled in the old colonial fashion, was covered thick with moss, woodbine and clematis clambered over it, and framed in one or two of the windows.

"She can scarcely be asleep," said Vale, looking eagerly around.

The house loomed above him dark and silent. There was no sound except the plash of the breakers on the beach just below. The silence and the white moonlight awed and oppressed him. He hastily broke a twig from a shrub near, and tossed it against a window above him. In a moment a curtain was parted, and a faint light

streamed out into the night. Vale stepped a few paces off, and stood plainly revealed in the flood of moonlight. The window was put up, and Margaret looked out.

Vale stretched out his hands.

"Margaret, Margaret!" in a low, eager tone.

"Why, Vale! is it you?" said her sweet voice.

"It is I, Margaret. Come down to me."

"In a minute, Vale."

She spoke hurriedly, and in a glad tone.

Vale went round to the door, and waited.

Soon he heard her step on the stairs, then the many bolts were drawn back one by one, and presently the ponderous door was flung open. Vale took in her whole face and figure at a single absorbing glance, — her soft eyes shining with a tender welcome for him, the round, white, massive chin, the soft outline of her cheeks, the waving hair pushed carelessly away from her forehead and dropping in heavy masses on her neck, the ivory throat bearing the beautiful head so regally, and the air of sweet and gentle pride that she always wore, — and, seeing her so, Vale caught her two hands put out in welcome, and drew her to him in passionate caresses.

"There, there, Vale, that will do," said the girl, shrinking back after the first kiss, and smiling a little. "You're just the same impulsive boy as ever."

"I'm so glad to see you, Margaret!" he said earnestly.

"And I'm glad to see you. But why did n't you come to the floor, and not go prowling around the windows like a burglar or a romantic lover?" she said, laughing softly.

"Because I did n't want Mrs. Amber about me," he said, with a grimace.

"Well, come in now. They are all asleep, and we can have a cozy talk."

"No, Margaret: you come out, — down to the arbor. It's too beautiful to stay in the house."

Margaret looked out doubtfully.

Vale stepped in, and took a heavy shawl from the stand in the hall.

"Now run and get your rubbers, there's a good girl," he continued. "You don't see your cousin Vale every day."

The girl hesitated no longer, but, running away for her equipments, came back in a moment.

"Do you know, Vale," she said, looking up and smiling as he gave her his arm to go

out, "this is a very romantic thing for me to do? If it was Elsie, it would be quite in character."

Vale's dark, brilliant eyes were upon her face.

"Did I frighten you?" he asked tenderly.

"Oh, no! for I guessed at once it was you," she said, with innocent frankness.

"How came you to do that?"

"I hardly know," she answered laughingly. "Perhaps because you're such a queer fellow that I'm prepared for any *outré* course of conduct on your part."

Vale made no answer to this, but started off in another course.

"I suppose," he remarked, "that you were at work for some of them, and that was why you happened to be up."

"No: I was writing a letter. So don't growl."

"A letter. To whom?" with quick jealousy.

"To Uncle Marmaduke."

"Oh! coming home in two months, you know."

All this while they had been passing through the garden, and now came out upon a rocky crest where a little arbor had been built, — a rude affair, but overlooking the broad, shining sea. Vale made her sit down, and stood by her.

"It is beautiful tonight, Vale."

"Yes, Margaret. Now tell me how they all are."

"Mrs. Amber is well; little Harry has got the measles; Willie has gone into the country" —

"There, there! spare me the particulars. You know I hate children."

"Yes: I know you do. So did Herod."

"Don't flatter me. How is Elsie?"

"Very well, and as pretty as a picture."

"Ah, indeed! any lovers?" with a curious look.

"No serious ones, I think," shaking her head, "unless, indeed, Dr. Godfrey is one."

"Dr. Godfrey? I once thought he had a penchant for you?"

"For me? Why, Vale! But you are mistaken."

"I care for nobody, nobody,
And nobody cares for me,"

She sang softly; but the soft eyes grew thoughtful, and her face sober.

"Don't say that, Margaret," said Vale quickly.

"It's true, though." Then, after a little pause, "I have n't told you about our visitor."

"Who is it?"

"A lady, a Mrs. St. Ives, — handsome, clever, and rich. She has a curious history. A very beautiful girl, my stepmother says, and a great belle, in her time. She went to Paris, and married there unfortunately; was separated from her husband, and he has been the same as dead to her for years. Indeed, she does n't know but he is dead. Mrs. Amber says she was a gay creature, full of life and the wildest spirits, but now she is taciturn and satirical. Elsie is a great favorite with her."

"How came Mrs. Amber to know her?" asked Vale indifferently.

"They were schoolmates, or at least early friends. Such quantities of gold ornaments she wears, you'll be amused, Vale. And yet one does n't laugh at her. You have a feeling that it would not be best to offend her."

Vale was silent, not seeming to take much interest in Mrs. St. Ives. They watched the steady rise and fall of the sea, and the shimmering splendor of the moon upon the waters. At last Margaret said, playfully, —

"A penny for your thoughts, Vale!"

"I was thinking that those glittering pebbles on the shore were so many golden eagles."

"What a fancy!"

"And your thoughts, Margaret?"

She hesitated a moment, and then said softly, —

"I was thinking that this shining path over the waves led up to the very gates of heaven; and so I went on, thinking of the rough paths we walk in our way there, and how very hard and weary the road is sometimes."

"That is as much alike as our thoughts often are, I imagine," said Vale bitterly. "Yours are in heaven, mine in hades."

"O Vale! you think me better than I am." Then, seeing the cloud on his sensitive face, she went on gently. "Tell me what you have been doing this long time."

"Tell you! God forbid!"

Margaret, in her woman's ignorance of sin and crime, thought of nothing more than foolish dissipation and fashionable folly. She knew Vale's weakness, knew well how terribly far he fell below what a man should be; but, of all the people whom she had

known, he, with his delicate, intuitive sympathies, was the one who understood her best. There were places in her life which she did not know how she would have lived over but for him. Old associations linked him to her: the bond was as strong as if the fictitious relationship was indeed real. Margaret had striven with all her might to keep Vale from going into wrong paths; she little guessed with how small effect. Now she said, her eyes filling, —

"Is it so bad, then, Vale?"

The tender voice touched him. Looking at her, he saw no shrinking from him, no abhorrence of his wickedness. It was as if an angel were near him; and yet the pitying, human love in her face, in the soft eyes swimming in tears, in the gentle touch of the hand she involuntarily laid upon his arm, thrilled him with an intense pleasure, — a pleasure so nearly akin to pain that he grew pale, and faltered in what he would have said. For a moment there was a conflict in his soul; the demon of darkness striving with his better self, the struggle of Diabolus with the angel of light. Two ways opened before him, — a simple, honest life, labor, and Margaret's love if he could win it; and the old, pleasant life of self-indulgence, Elsie Shannon, and her fortune. Just now his soul cried out for Margaret. Nothing in the whole world seemed so sweet as her love. It conquered. He seized her hands, bent his flaming eyes upon her, and in a voice hoarse with emotion said, —

"Margaret, save me from myself. Oh! love me! Be my wife."

She looked up to meet his intent eyes, almost fierce in their wild longing; to see the world of passion in his face. She shrank away, trembling.

"You shrink from me?" he cried vehemently.

His fierce, iron-like grasp on her fingers forced an exclamation of pain from her.

Instantly he was covering them with kisses.

"My love! my darling! have I hurt you, in my wild passion? Forgive me, Margaret! I love you so."

Margaret stood white and still. All she had known of his passionate, intense temperament had not prepared her for anything like this.

"Yes, you will be mine, Margaret," he said, in a voice of thrilling tenderness. "You never knew I loved you so, darling."

Now you will pay it all back to me. You shall not be their slave any longer: you belong to me. You will love me, and I shall work for you, and lead a pure, honest life for your sake. I'll cheat the Evil One of my soul, after all, Margaret; for you will help me. Oh, it will be a most happy life we shall live together, my love;" and the last words were almost a sob from the very weariness of passion.

Margaret waited till the tempest that shook him was almost past, till he looked up in her face with an expression of such reverence and worship that she could scarcely keep back the tears which were waiting to come. Then she said, so low and soft that he scarcely heard, —

"No, Vale: it cannot be."

"Not yet, I know, — you think you must give so much of your life to them; but I will break all those Lilliputian chains. Oh, I shall take a pleasure in crushing down such puny obstacles."

"I mean, Vale, it can never be!" faltered Margaret, dreading the storm unspeakably.

He sprang up, gazed at her with glowing eyes.

"Don't say you cannot love me, Margaret," he pleaded.

"I don't love you in that way, Vale."

He muttered a malediction, shaking all over with suppressed passion. Then he sank down beside her, saying, with white lips that tried to smile, —

"I see how it is. You don't trust my reformation; but I'll prove it to you. Oh, you don't know what I can do."

"No, Vale: it is n't that." Then with a sudden despair she said, "Vale, won't you understand me? Won't you take pity on me? You must see how much you distress me."

He folded his arms around her.

She lifted up her head.

"Vale!"

It was not that one word, but something in her face, that made him release her at once.

"What is it you wish me to understand?" he demanded with lowering brow.

"That, much as I love you, I don't love you at all in the way you wish me to love you."

He looked at her with that dark, fixed sternness.

"You love some one else, perhaps," he said.

Margaret's pride and anger rose. She drew her shawl around her closer.

"I think I will go in now, Vale," she said.

"Stop!" Then, with a quick revulsion, "Dear love, forgive me. But you maddened me so. You don't mean you will never love me. You don't mean that, certainly, Margaret?"

"I do mean it, Vale. It goes to my heart to pain you, but it would do no good to keep back the truth."

"But you don't know. You have n't thought about it at all. The idea is all new to you," he pleaded.

Margaret was silent a moment. In her girlish dreams it had been a different person whom she had fancied might make her happiness; a man true and strong and self-reliant; one in whom her weakness would find strength, and her hungry woman's heart rest in entire trust, — a very different man from Vale. Margaret thought she did know, so she said, "I think I am not mistaken, Vale."

"But I tell you that you can save me."

She shook her head incredulously.

"You refuse to believe it. You turn away from me when you have it in your power to win me back to the goodness you love so well. Your kindness for me is all feigned then. You don't care though I am forever lost. You will not lift a finger: you will stand by and see me go down to perdition."

Margaret was very white and still. He knew he had touched her heart, knew that all her overflowing pity for him would argue in his favor.

"Even if what you say is true, Vale, and I do not think it is, for you would not do for my sake what you will not for your own" —

"I will. I swear it!" he interrupted.

"Even if this were true, I should have no right to give myself to you; for God gave me my own life to live. And a marriage without love is a sin. You know I always thought so."

Saying so, she stood before him, all the deep, true feeling in her pure heart shining in her face; and his desire for her love grew stronger.

"You will not pity me then, Margaret. You will do nothing for me. You will say some time, 'I might have saved him if I would, but I would not. And yet I have

told him so many times how well he was worth the saving; but when it came to me to do I would not do it.' And you slight my love, Margaret, — I who have loved you all my life. Where I go, what becomes of me, how much I suffer, it is all nothing to you."

A long silence fell between them now. The moon was wheeling down the sky; the in-coming tide rose in great, sweeping swells upon the beach; the sea sang its world-old anthem; a low-breathing, whispering wind came rustling up from the shore, shook the tangled vines upon the arbor, and ruffled the loose-lying hair upon Margaret's temples. And Vale looked at her with wild love and longing: never had she seemed half so lovely and sweet, and for the moment he felt that the world held nothing so precious to him as Margaret. She looked up, seeing it all in his face; and then the beautiful eyes grew humid, and something within her seemed to plead for him not less eagerly than his own eloquent passion. If he loved as he said, why not be all that he asked? Why not consecrate herself to the work of developing the latent good in him? It

would be a great work, worthy her womanhood; a grand, an unselfish doing of good. And then the thought flitted through Margaret's mind that this was her woman's fate.

Poor Vale! Were all his fine capacities to die out? Oh that long, dreary going downward! Why not marry him? What she did would affect no one. Nobody's heart was to be broken by her misery if so it should fall out. Margaret thought with keen pain. But Vale loved her, better than any one else in the whole world loved her. And her heart was so hungry for love. What to do? Margaret was just in that exalted state of mind when it is easy to make a great sacrifice, and to make it all the while persuading herself that it was no sacrifice, but a doing of her own pleasure. Such thoughts would never have filled Margaret's mind had she known, what Vale did, that at that moment he was liable to arrest and imprisonment for the crime of forgery, committed simply to procure the means to gratify his ungovernable passions.

"Margaret!" His eyes were bent upon hers in tender entreaty. "It is only one word that I want."

AFTER LONG YEARS.

BY ADA F. STRICKLAND.

CHAPTER I.

It was a beautiful room,—beautiful in every sense of the word. A soft gray velvet carpet, brightened by clusters of glowing rosebuds, covered the floor; rare paintings hung on the walls, and statuary of artistic finish stood upon brackets in the corners. The air was warm with the soft breath of a furnace, and just now the cuckoo in the marble clock on the mantel had chanted the hour. Surely no outside appearance had been spared to make the owner of this room a happy woman. But there was anything but a happy gleam in her large dark eyes as she stood by the small centre table leaning one hand upon it as if for support. Her heavy black velvet dress fell in sombre folds about her, unrelieved by a glimmer of white or the gleam of a gem, and the red lips were curved with a scornful smile as she listened to the man who stood in her presence. He was not a man either that most women would have scorned. Though not handsome, there was a power in his haughty, arrogant face, an easy, lordly grace in his manner, which few women could withstand.

"Mrs. Durant," he said, "you will no doubt soon see the propriety of yielding to my wishes in this respect as in all others. I wish to be obeyed."

His voice was low and musical, but firm, and, when he had spoken, he made a movement as if to leave the room.

"Wait a moment, Karl," said a voice clear and silvery as a crystal bell,—a wonderful voice,—one that art-critics had said would make its owner's fortune on the stage. "Listen to me," she said. "For once in my life I must be heard. Be seated and be patient, for I have much to say."

Slowly and nonchalantly Karl Durant wheeled an easy-chair toward his wife, and without a word took another himself. But she took no notice of the offered chair, speaking rapidly but clearly.

"Four years ago," she said, "Karl Durant, you took me from my happy, humble home, a pure, loving, trusting child of fif-

teen years, and brought me to this house, a very Castle Delight to me then. I loved you, I thought myself happy in your love. But what have I been since my feet crossed its threshold? *It did not take long for the supreme selfishness of your nature to assert itself, and your wife has never been anything more than your slave.* What I should wear, what I should eat and drink, and where I should go, have all been appointed for me, by yourself and your mother. You kept me from my home and friends, because it must not be known that your wife was only a mechanic's daughter, until, when I did go, my eyes could only rest upon the pale, dead faces of father and mother. And now comes the command that I lay aside these robes of mourning, fit emblems of a broken heart and blighted life. This I tell you, Karl, I refuse to do. Instead I lay aside *tonight forever* the golden chains that have eaten into my very soul."

Karl Durant arose slowly and glanced at the clock.

"I believe I have an engagement for this hour, Bernice," was all he said. "When you are less nervous and theatrical I will listen to you." And he passed out of the room.

For five minutes or more Bernice Durant stood as motionless as one of the statues about her, her face gleaming as whitely from the gloom of her surroundings. Then she, too, without one backward look at the wealth and luxury about her, walked slowly from the room and up the broad stairway that led to her own apartment. When she had closed and locked the door, she went about with the same apathetic calmness, gathering together the few articles necessary for the purpose. The rich robe she wore was exchanged for a simple black walking suit. Then she went to a closet and drew forth a little worn trunk, that seemed strangely out of place with the rest of the furniture. Over this, her enforced calmness gave way, and sinking like a tired child upon the floor beside it, she threw her arms about it as though it were a living friend. Poor child! It seemed the

last link between her broken heart, and her happy girlhood. Leaning her head upon it, with swiftly falling tears, memory went back to the day the little trunk was brought home upon her father's shoulder, to be filled by the loving hands of the pale, sweet mother, with the dainty garments the same hands had fashioned for the use of this loved and only daughter, in the school to which they were sending her. She remembered how she lay till late that night in that mother's arms listening to the tender counsels that were to be as a hedge of love about her throughout her school life. Then came the journey and two bright years of improvement. Then she was fourteen and had gone to visit a schoolmate, where she had met Karl Durant, and in less than one year was his wife.

He had since told her, and she remembered it now bitterly, that he had married her thus young because he wished to so mould her character that she could have no other will but his. Her life since then she has described herself.

Not long did she give to memory now. Within the battered trunk she placed a few simple articles of clothing, and then rang for her maid.

"Felicie," she said, "have this trunk taken down to the side door. I am going to send it away."

Felicie, flighty little French girl though she was, dared ask no questions, though she stared with great round eyes at the queer little trunk, as she retreated to bring the footman, who carried the trunk gingerly away. An hour later,—it was now quite dark,—a slight, black-robed figure came down the stairs with noiseless tread and passed out into the street. A carriage drew up at her signal, the driver assisted her in and then drove swiftly and noisily away. Thus vanished Bernice Durant out of her husband's life.

CHAPTER II.

Morning came to the handsome house on Portman Square as it came to every dwelling high or low in all the land. But it was very late in the morning, indeed almost noon, when Karl Durant came down to his luxurious breakfast. Everything in the breakfast-room was as handsomely appointed as in the parlors above, and spoke

of a refined taste as well as of unlimited wealth.

As he took his seat there was a rustle of silk at the door, and a lady whose striking resemblance to himself proclaimed her at once his mother entered the room rather hastily. Without the usual stately greeting passed between them, she began,—

"Karl, my son, Felicie tells me"—

For once in his life Karl Durant was guilty of an impolite act. He interrupted his mother.

"I have heard Felicie's story, mother. I am astonished that you disturb yourself or me over the whims and caprices of a girl. Doubtless when my wife is ready, she will open her door to her maid, or come down to her breakfast. Let us hear no more of it now."

Evidently even Mrs. Durant, the elder, stood somewhat in awe of her son, for she said no more. But when breakfast was over and luncheon had passed and it grew near the hour when they were to go out together to dine even Mr. Durant thought it best to inquire into the matter of the closed and silent rooms. It was as Felicie Ward said: the doors were closed and locked, and to all his knocking there came no answer. But the slender lock soon yielded, and he stood within the deserted chamber.

His quick eye at once saw that it was deserted. Everything was in perfect order,—each dress in its place, each jewel in its casket,—but the owner was gone. There was nothing to explain the absence; only the fact remained. But, not what was that white object pinned to the sleeve of the dress she wore last night? Just a slip of paper bearing his address and the following words:—

"You need not look for me, Karl, this side the grave. Whatever I have done, remember that you have driven me to it."

Then came the terrible thought, like a vivid flash of lightning, revealing all beneath and around it.—

"She is dead: she has taken her own life, and I have driven her to it."

And this thought never again left him. Asleep or awake, it was burned in fiery letters on his brain; for, with all his faults, he had loved his wife. His coldness and seeming cruelty were more the fault of his education than of his nature.

Day after day went by, and still there came no tidings of the missing woman. At last his pride gave way, and he placed the case in the hands of detectives. The hackman was found who had taken her away, but he knew very little. He had driven the lady, he said, to the wharf, where she had dismissed him. There was no steamer to leave at that hour. Then the little trunk remembered and described by Felicie was found, torn, battered and empty, upon the river's edge. That was all, and the case went on the records as one of the "mysterious disappearances" that are growing familiar to dwellers in the great cities. But who shall tell all the feelings of love, remorse and despair that surged through the heart of the husband, sweeping away all the pride and affected indifference until it throbbed and ached even as do the hearts of common men?

Too late he saw his error. Too late he saw how his cold, domineering nature had crushed the life out of the young, impulsive spirit he had linked to his own. A changed and sorrowing man, his household was broken up, and six months from the day he lost his wife he was a wanderer in a foreign land.

CHAPTER III.

Ten years later! And the scene is a crowded theatre in New York. All the elite of the city are there, for the manager has promised them a new star of the first magnitude. "An American by birth they say she is," says the younger of two men, lounging in one of the boxes. "But she has never acted this side the water. Did you see her in Paris, Durant? Rumor says she made quite a sensation there."

Karl does not hear him. Indeed he has grown so absent-minded in his ten years of wanderings, that his friends say Karl is growing old. And old he looks in the full glare of the gas-light that shows how heavily streaked with gray the dark hair has become, and there are lines under his eyes that a heavier hand than Time's has traced.

"No: I did not see her," he says when the question is repeated. "I have not been in a theatre before in ten years."

Ten years! Swiftly his thoughts go back to that last time when he had compelled the young creature he called his wife to accompany him here to this very theatre,—a

scene of mirth and gayety, when her own heart was breaking with grief. Can he ever forget her? Will the Angel of Remorse ever cease with stern, unbending finger to point back to that hated past? While he ponders, there is a murmur of applause in the house, which deepens into tumult as the promised star is led on the stage. Glancing thither, carelessly, his eyes linger spell-bound. He has never seen a more magnificent woman than this actress, he thinks. Faultless in grace, beauty and dress, and listen! she speaks, and the clear, liquid notes fill the great room to its farthest corner. Where has he heard such a voice before? Ah, memory reverts again to the girl-wife whose heart ceased to throb with pain so long ago. It is identical with hers, though its volume, that used to seem quite out of place with the slender figure of the girl, suits well the matured *physique* of this wonderful woman. The play goes on, and through all Karl Durant hears nothing but that one voice that holds his senses captive.

Once the great dark eyes of the actress meet his, and he fancies there is a lurking scorn in their depths.

At last it is over, and out in the frosted, star-lit air, his brain steadies itself. Pshaw! what madness is this that possesses him? It is only a dream. There can be nothing in common with his dead wife and this actress from over the seas. But it is a dream that haunts him through all the hours of that long night.

CHAPTER IV.

In the afternoon of the next day, weary of all about him, Karl strolled into the park, and sinking into one of its many secluded seats, is almost lost in dreams, when he is interrupted by a voice, a silvery, childish one. "No, Hadley, I tell you I don't want to see the swans. I should think I was too old for that. I want to read this paper to see what it says about mamma, and here is my seat."

"But don't you see," pleads the distressed attendant, "that there is already a gentleman here? Come, Master Karl, to the next bench."

"Karl!" His own name! Looking up, he sees his namesake, a bright, handsome boy of nine or ten years, with clustering

black hair and big blue eyes that flash just now with impatience.

"Come in, my boy," says the elder Karl kindly; "there is room enough for both of us."

Nothing loth, the boy came on, followed by his attendant, a respectable looking Englishman.

"You see, sir," said the boy in a polite, manly way, "ever since we have been in New York this has been my place to read the papers, but mamma would be sorry if she knew I was rude."

"But you are not rude," said Mr. Durant. "Two Karls ought to be friends, ought not they?"

"Is your name Karl?" asked the child eagerly. "Mamma said my papa's name was Karl."

"What was his other name?" asked Durant, his heart and brain again in a tumult strange and bewildering.

"I don't know," with a puzzled look. "Does everybody have another name?" Then, authoritatively, "Hadley, you can go on to the hotel. This gentleman will bring me there."

"But, Master Karl," said the much-enduring Hadley, "your mamma said I was not to lose sight of you."

"Bah!" with a real French accent and shrug of the shoulders, "you and mamma think I am yet a baby. Go, then, somewhere!" And Hadley retreated.

Left alone, the two Karls drew closer together, and the strange child with his arm about the other's neck said briefly, —

"I like you, Mr. Karl! You look like a picture there is in my mamma's trunk."

"What is your mamma's name?" almost whispered the other.

"Why, don't you know? Did n't you see her last night at the theatre? Here it is in this paper, — Madame De Souchette. But my name she says is only Karl."

"Ah, that is it," thought Durant. "He is like his mother, and his mother is like Bernice. That is why he attracts me."

"But you did n't answer my question," broke in the irrepressible, "and that mamma says is impolite. What is your name?"

"My name is Karl Durant. Here is my card, which you may give to your mamma."

"Come, now, and let me introduce you," said Karl the younger, as if it were a matter of every-day occurrence for him to take

strange gentlemen and introduce them to his mother.

"No," said Karl gently, "she might not like that. Take her my card now, and perhaps she will let you take a drive with me this evening. Go now with Hadley."

And he was left alone with a strange, warm feeling at his heart that had never been there before.

"Man proposes, — God disposes." An old, trite saying, but one as true as life or death. That evening ride was never to come. Sauntering leisurely to his hotel a little later, Karl saw just in front of him the navy blue suit and dark curls of his little friend, who was springing forward to cross the crowded street, held back by the faithful Hadley. But he had seen his new friend, and was determined to speak to him, and just as he reached the centre of the street thronged with vehicles he turned with a saucy laugh to look back at his pursuer.

The next moment the huge pole of an advancing omnibus struck him, and the next he would have been under the horses' trampling feet. But a strong arm clasped him, firm hands held him aloft, and bruised, stunned, bleeding, but alive, the little Karl was borne by his older namesake to the sidewalk. An hundred pair of eyes saw the brave deed, and an hundred pair of lungs gave vent to a cheer, not often heard on busy Broadway. Karl could not now refuse to go with the reviving boy to his hotel. But when he had taken him to the parlor, and sent a waiter to inform his mother of the accident, he would have withdrawn, but the little arms clung closer round his neck, and the weak voice whispered "Please stay," and he waited. Then there was a commotion in the hall, swift feet at the door, and Madame came up to him, caught her child from his arms without ever a look at the rescuer's face, — clasped him close to her heart, pressed a thousand kisses on his face, murmuring in his ear sweet words of pity and love, in that marvelous voice that had enchanted thousands. Then the small hands pushed her away.

"Pshaw, mamma! I am not dead, but this is the gentleman who kept me from it."

With a swift, graceful movement, she turned and faced him. The room swam before their eyes. There was a cry, —

"Karl, my husband!"

"Bernice?"

Then it was not the woman who fainted, but the man who lay at her feet. It had all been too much for even his strong nerves of steel.

This is the story she told him, kneeling by his side in the twilight that evening, her hand clasped in his, a glory not of earth around and about them.

"Believe me, Karl, not a month had passed after I left you, before I would have given worlds to have returned, but I dared not. And through all these years, fear has kept me back. Having deceived you so about my death, did I not have reason to fear that you would turn me from your door? But that was not my plan. It was all arranged for me by Madame Souchet, the actress, who had been trying for a year to persuade me to become her pupil. When the hackman left me at the wharf, she met me there, and that night at midnight we sailed for Europe. It was her plan, which I did not know of, until long afterward, to leave the little trunk there upon the wharf. She believed, as I did then, that you did not love me. That you had treated me cruelly, and she wished to sever every link between us. But there was a link about which neither of us knew anything then, which

was to prove all-powerful in drawing my heart back to yours. When we discovered this she took me to her mother's in the South of France, and there, almost six months afterward, our boy was born. Ah, how I loved his father then! But still I dared not come back to you. I left my baby there with good, kind friends, seeing him every year, until he was eight years old. Since then he has traveled with me. This year a strange longing came over me to visit this city again, and I could not resist a wild hope that I would meet you here. That for the sake of your son you would not refuse to forgive his mother, who always loved you, Karl, — always. Was her hope in vain?"

"My wife," breathed Karl, drawing her down until her face touched his, "you have much more to forgive than I. I was cruel, — blindly cruel, — but you have said you loved me, and God knows there never was a moment that you were not the dearest hope of my life. We love each other. Let that be all we think of now."

"And you both love me?" said Karl, the irrepressible, bringing his face, bright as ever, between them.

"And we love our boy," they both said softly.

ALICE'S SACRIFICE.

BY ETHELIN B. BRANDE.

CHAPTER I.

When I was a little, a very little girl, I used to go, with a few others, daily to Mrs. Raynor's school. How well I remember the pleasant green lanes through which we passed, the quaint old room in which we gathered, with spelling books and Testaments, and samplers, and the fair, placid face that beamed on us so kindly from beneath the shadowy borders of fine lace that always decorated her caps.

Outside the trees waved their branches in the breeze with a pleasant rustle, the birds sang sweet songs, and the distant sounds of labor and of animal life came faintly to our ears. It was a pleasant spot, and she was a lonely old lady who taught us the rudiments of knowledge there.

She lived all alone in the little cottage,

in whose kitchen she taught the children of the neighbors such simple lore as suited their capacities, and she proved herself an invaluable assistant of their hard-working, overburdened mothers, by keeping them out of mischief several hours daily.

We all loved her when we were children, for her strict rule was tempered with mercy, and few children fail to detect between the needful discipline inflicted by love, and the stern injustice of the unloving. When we grew older, we often sought her counsel, her praise, or her encouragement. We were sure of her ready sympathy, and had an intuitive trust in her wisdom. It was not until after years that we learned how a nature once as trustful, impulsive, and heedless as our own, had been disciplined by sorrow, and, though seathed and scarred, had survived the storms of human passion, and outlived

all the mistakes of her youth, having come out of the conflict calm and peaceful and strong.

Alice Winston had been the favorite pupil of Mrs. Raynor, and long after she had been transferred to other schools—Miss Duprez's Select School for young ladies, and the Seminary—she seldom allowed a day to pass without visiting the little cottage. And when sent away from home to some grand city school to be "finished," she did not forget her beloved friend. Alice's first visits, when she came home for vacations, were always to Mrs. Raynor's. She would run down the little green lane, through the garden gate, and, softly opening the cottage door, stand there upon the threshold radiant with life and beauty; a lovely Hebe, bearing joy to the lonely heart of that aged woman. Alice would twine her round, white arms about the old woman's neck, and kiss her wrinkled cheek, and call her by all the loving names that she could remember. And Mrs. Raynor would make her sit down upon the low stool by her side, that had been her seat from childhood, and holding those plump white hands in her own withered and shrunken ones, she would look down into the bright young face, and listen with quiet interest to the girl's prattle, the history of her school troubles and triumphs, the anecdotes of her school mates and teachers, and of the little adventures that constituted the romance of her life. Or she and Alice would sit down together to her simple and very humble repast, which, Alice would repeat again and again, was better than all the feasts to which she had ever been bidden.

More than a year had passed, and Alice had never confided to this friend one heart experience. The little school-girl flirtations into which she had been drawn had never more than rippled the surface of her affections, if indeed they had touched a deeper feeling than vanity. But when she came home on the second summer, when she walked slowly down the green lane, and with a thoughtful mien stood within the open door of Mrs. Raynor's cottage, that good lady, so anxiously watchful of her child's faintest change of expression, needed no other revelation to tell that the fountains of feeling had been stirred to their hidden depths.

There was an inexplicable something in the young girl's glance and air, and in every

graceful, quiet movement, that seemed as if timed to slow, exquisite music, that told of divine harmonies awakened in her soul, to which her whole life should henceforth be a response. The ancient childlikeness was gone forever, and though her greeting had lost nothing of its fervid affection, Mrs. Raynor could not fail to note the change, nor to observe the long, heavy silences, so sweet, as she knew by Alice's soft smile, that she could not break them. She knew that Alice would conquer her maiden shyness, and pour her secret into the heart of her friend.

So she talked to her as usual of all that had occurred during her absence, of the pets which had been left at the cottage to be tended, of her old schoolmates, and a thousand things which had been wont to interest her. She prepared the meal, and spread the table beneath the trees in the garden; but the white biscuits and golden butter, the rich cream and early strawberries, failed to draw one commendation from Alice's lips. Her thoughts were far away, feasting upon memory and hope.

But when the sun had set, and the stars began to peep out, glimmering through the uncurtained window, through which, also, the odors won by the gentle evening dews from the perfumed hearts of the flowers came stealing, Alice, with her head upon her friend's bosom, told her all the story of her love.

Arthur Elverson—she pronounced the name in tender, liquid sounds, dwelling on each syllable as if it were the sweetest music, and with a sort of coy pride repeating it again and again—Arthur Elverson was a young Philadelphian; a man of genius,—a rising man in his profession. He was a serious, thoughtful man; not in the least such an one, Alice said, as would seem likely to have been attracted by a giddy school-girl. But he loved her: yes, he had told her so, in words and tones that she should never, never forget. He was coming to Edgewood,—coming to visit her, and to ask her of her father. Papa would be sure to consent; for though Arthur Elverson was poor now, he had so much genius, and was succeeding so well in his profession, that everybody predicted a proud career for him. It was too much honor for her, little Alice Winston, who knew so very little, to be the wife of such a man. Only if she could make him happy, it would be all that she

desired. Of course papa could never refuse, — did dear Mrs. Raynor think he could?

Mrs. Raynor could only bid the girl be patient and hopeful. A presentiment that her heart was to receive a shock — that the course of the love, which seemed so genuine and guileless, was destined to obstructions — fell darkly upon Mrs. Raynor's feelings. She could scarcely repress the sympathy she really felt, and Alice saw a tear upon her cheek as her friend kissed her at parting, and turned back into her lonely cottage. As Alice walked home through the green lane, with her father's old servant behind her for a protector, she pondered upon Mrs. Raynor's evident emotion. She had expected a glad sympathy in her feelings, and it was not until the thought came to her mind that some memory of youth and love might have been awakened by her story in the ancient woman's breast, that she forgot her disappointment. A letter that awaited her, and heralded the coming of her lover on the morrow, chased all saddened thoughts away, and sent her to her pillow with a sweet, restless joy that drove away slumber, until, tired even of her pleasant fancies, she fell asleep, and into the land of rosy dreams, at an early hour in the morning.

Alice was a petted child; and when she was found sleeping at the breakfast-hour nobody thought of awakening her. She should have breakfast whenever she awoke, her papa said; and as he was passing her door before going out to his business, he stole in and kissed her rosy cheek, and called down a blessing upon the head of his beautiful darling.

The caress awoke Alice, and she threw her arms around her father's neck, and kissed him in return, calling him her "dear, best papa."

"Ah, little rogue, I know what those pretty words mean," said Judge Winston; "you want to coax your poor papa out of something. Come, now, what is it? Out with it at once, for I must be off to the office."

"O papa, how shrewd you are! You lawyers see and understand everything. Do promise me, promise me that — that you will grant anything I may ask of you today."

"But that would be giving a pledge blindly. Tell me what you want. Is it some money to buy finery? Or a present

for your old school-mistress? Tell me quickly, for I must be off."

"No, no, it's not money, papa, but something better than money. Just promise me, you best papa."

"Something better than money, eh? Some school-girl notion! But I suppose I must promise, for I hear the carriage coming round. There, don't smother me because I have made a foolish promise, or I'll retract it."

The Judge went laughing from the room, and as Alice sank back upon her pillow with an ineffable smile upon her lovely face, she heard his cheerful voice giving directions to the servant beneath her window, and the next moment the sound of the carriage wheels crunching the gravel as he drove away.

Early in the afternoon Arthur Elverson was announced. Mrs. Winston was out, and the lovers met alone. After a short visit Mr. Elverson departed, informing Alice that he should return in the evening, to solicit her father's consent to their engagement. He would even deny himself the pleasure of a longer visit then, because he would do nothing without the approval of her parents.

In the evening, accordingly, Mr. Elverson called, and, having sent up his card, was shown into the library, where Judge Winston presently joined him. A half-hour passed, and then Alice was summoned to the library. Judge Winston met her at the door, and, as he led her forward, he said, —

"This gentleman, my dear, informs me that he comes here with your approval, to ask of me the most precious thing I have to bestow. Shall I grant his request? Tell me, my darling."

"Yes, papa," faltered Alice, blushing, and not daring to meet the eager eyes fastened upon her face; "oh, yes, if you please, and, besides, you know what you promised me this morning."

"And so you expected all this, and so coaxed that promise from me. What an artful little plotter! Here, take her, Elverson; she's quite too shrewd for me."

The Judge placed his daughter's hand in that of Arthur Elverson, and hurried from the room, thus striving by light words to hide the emotion that made his voice falter, and eyes overflow. And so Alice Winston and Arthur Elverson were bethrothed. Happy, happy hour!

CHAPTER II.

A year had passed since the evening that witnessed the betrothal of the lovers; a year of quiet joy to them, but marked by changes and misfortunes that threatened them with unanticipated sorrow. Judge Winston's floating capital had all been invested in some grand speculations that promised, on paper, wonderful success. Elated by his prospects, and blinded by the apparent favor of fortune, he had raised money in every possible way to add to these investments, even by mortgage upon all his real estate, and his wife's fortune, including the house, with its elegant grounds and offices, where his family resided. All he possessed was risked; and when the last mad venture failed, and the bubble burst, he was utterly ruined. The shock proved too much for him. He was prostrated by two quickly recurring attacks of paralysis, and within one week his wife and Alice saw themselves plunged into poverty, and bewailed the hopeless illness of the strong man on whom until then they had leaned for support. Mrs. Winston, the stepmother of Alice, was a weak, selfish woman. She had been proud in prosperity, — proud of her position, of her husband's high reputation, and of the beauty and grace of her stepdaughter. She had no force of character by which to withstand the assaults of misfortune, and so she yielded to a weak despair.

She contrived, however, to maintain her influence over the weakened mind of her husband; and when, at length, a project occurred to her by which she might again build up the fortunes of the family, or at least secure to herself a competence, she did not hesitate to urge it upon his attention.

She had a distant relative, a bachelor of immense wealth, whose ugly person and morose disposition had hitherto prevented his marriage. This man had long since fixed his regards upon the young Alice, but, upon the appearance of Arthur Elverson upon the scene, had reluctantly withdrawn, without putting forward his pretensions, except privately, to his cousin. To him, then, Mrs. Winston wrote in her affliction, inviting him to visit her; and when he came she encouraged a renewal of his thwarted suit. Her representations and reproaches won her half-imbecile husband to consent to her plan.

Then followed a bitter season of persecution for poor Alice. Arthur Elverson, who had come down to be near his betrothed in her affliction, was ignominiously dismissed by Mrs. Winston, and denied admission to the judge, with whom he wished to plead his cause. He saw Alice once or twice, by stealth, at Mrs. Raynor's; and then leaving his weeping betrothed in the arms of that excellent woman, he tore himself away. Alice was left to bear the persecution of those who should have been her friends. Mrs. Winston would picture to her the misery and suffering into which her invalid father and his devoted wife would shortly be plunged; her own trials and struggles as the wife of a man with his fortune yet to make, and all embittered by the consciousness that she might have averted all this, — that wealth and luxury for herself, and all the comforts his situation demanded for her father, had been in her power, and she had refused them.

And Judge Winston, in his feeble, imperfect utterance, with his mournful glance fixed full upon her face, would plead with her not to sacrifice herself and her parents.

"I always intended to help Elverson, and to put him upon the path to fortune. But all that is past. He is poor, poor fellow, and my little Alice knows nothing about poverty. Better take Herman Godfrey, and let Elverson go. Then we can all stay here, and be as happy as the day is long."

And Mrs. Winston would say, —

"Remember, Alice, a daughter's first duty is to her parents; and I am sure you owe me as much as if I were your real mother, whom you cannot remember. Here's Herman Godfrey, who offers you everything a woman could desire of wealth and luxury, besides a home, and everything for your parents, while Elverson is poor, and can hardly give you a decent home. If you persist in marrying him, you undutiful girl, your poor father and I, who have sacrificed everything for him, will have to go to the alms-house, for aught I can see to prevent us."

"But surely, mamma, if Mr. Godfrey is so anxious to assist you, why cannot he do it all the same if I do not marry him? He knows I cannot marry him, because I do not love him, and because I am engaged to Mr. Elverson."

"Whom you do love, I suppose you would say; for you have more than a school-girl's

ordinary amount of romance. But that will not serve you when you see your father and me dying in the poorhouse, to which, in your disregard of the plainest demands of duty, you have consigned us."

And so the girl's mind was harassed by conflicting feelings; her judgment biased and swayed by argument she knew not how to meet; her heart torn by appeals which she could not answer, until she began to look upon herself as a victim selected for the sacrifice; and gradually she settled down into the conviction that there was no escape from the duty before her. She would give up Elverson; she would marry Godfrey, since her parents desired it, and thus secure to them all that wealth could bestow; then, perhaps, God would mercifully let her die, since she would have accomplished already the single duty of her life.

She went to her parents and acquainted them with her decision, which was received rapturously; but, begging to be excused from an interview with Godfrey, she stole out and took her way down the green lane, toward Mrs. Raynor's cottage.

That excellent woman had been absent from her home for several weeks, and during the bitterest season of her trial, Alice had missed her advice and sympathy. To her, now, the poor girl fled, and poured out upon her sympathizing bosom her tears and the history of all she had suffered and sacrificed.

"My child," said Mrs. Raynor, after she had listened to Alice's broken narration, "this must not be. I speak as one in authority. Arthur Elverson, whom I have summoned, will arrive here tomorrow evening. Then you must become his wife. Here, beneath my humble roof, the ceremony shall be performed; and when once he has the power to deliver you from this snare, I will place the means in his hands by which the comfort of your parents shall be secured, and their willing acquiescence in your marriage gained."

Alice had gazed at Mrs. Raynor as she spoke in extreme astonishment, mixed with gladness. A singular dignity seemed suddenly to invest the aged woman. She truly spoke as one in authority, and her words convinced and calmed the sorrowing girl. Promising an explanation when Arthur arrived, Mrs. Raynor soon dismissed her to her home; and Alice returned thither hope-

ful and even happy, so fully did she trust the words of her friend.

The next evening she met Elverson at the cottage, almost believing that it was but to say farewell, as the preparations for her marriage had that day been commenced at home; but his cheerful appearance, and Mrs. Raynor's confident look, somewhat reassured her. The strange events through which she had passed seemed to have prepared her for anything that might occur, and she listened almost without surprise to the strange tale which Mrs. Raynor proceeded to relate.

"Alice," she said, "when I first heard of the project to marry you to Godfrey, I determined to prevent it. I knew that I had the power, and I might have used it then, but determined first to arrange all things so that none could blame the course I had taken. I would far more gladly have looked upon your dying hour than upon that of your bridal with a man you did not, could not, love. I have known the misery of a marriage without love. You must never know it. I was very young when my parents married me to a man more than twice my age. He had wealth and station, and they were poor. I had beauty, and he bought it and me with his gold; and yet I believe he loved me well, though I felt at first only indifference, that soon became downright aversion. But thus I lived on for years. I dressed, and danced, and traveled, and was admired; and many envied me; but they knew not the restless discontent that drove me from my home, and from the little children growing up there under the careless charge of servants, because I hated my luxuries, and abhorred the hand that bestowed them. All these years my heart was unawakened, but my time came at last. I had not the safeguard of the faintest regard for my husband, and so, when one with insinuating words of veiled sympathy for sorrows that he thus dared to hint, came daily and bowed at my feet, I learned to listen for his footsteps, and distinguish the proud bearing of his head in the crowd, and to hang entranced upon his lightest word. O my children! I was very weak, but not sinful as I might have been, for my husband saved me. He loved me after all my years of coldness and scorn, and he was watchful. So one day with words of tenderest affection, he told me that he knew all, and that if I would

but trust him he would save me. He would take me far away, and give me change of scene, and many pleasures, that I might forget; and he said—I shall never forget with what a tender humility—that he had been very wrong in winning my beautiful youth for the garland of his age. But he was old now, and could not live long; and he bade me be patient, and wait for my freedom!

"I fell at his feet in an agony of remorse and contrition, and when he raised me tenderly in his arms, and told me, that he could forgive what was after all so natural in me, far better than the wrong he had himself done me, for the first in all my married life I threw my arms around his neck and kissed him. I was glad that I had given him that one caress when next morning I was summoned to his bedside to see him die. His illness was but for a few hours, and then I was left alone, — a wealthy young widow in the world's parlance.

"My lover sought me when all was over and I was free to receive my friends. But I had given orders that he should not be admitted, and never saw him more. The scales had fallen from my eyes, and I saw the true character of the man, and though my heart still turned toward him, for I longed for sympathy, I resolutely refused to see him. Of all my children only one survived, my youngest son. Leaving him in the care of his guardian I secluded myself from the world. At first the feelings that prompted this retreat were morbid and irrational, but when time and thought had brought their healing discipline, I still hesitated to leave my retreat, and though always informing myself of my child's welfare, as a voluntary punishment for the faults of my early life, I refused to see him. He grew up without knowledge of his mother's existence; until today he has remained in ignorance of it, though I have watched his course proudly. But now, at last, my child."

Arthur Elverson's arms were round the ancient, trembling form, that lay upon his bosom, and tears that were no disgrace to his manhood fell from his eyes. Alice wept in sympathy, and it was long before the group returned to calmness.

"My child, do you forgive me?" said Mrs. Raynor.

"I have nothing to forgive," Arthur Elverson replied, "except the loss of my

mother's society and care. For the rest, the wrong lay far back of the involuntary outreachings of her heart, and it is not for her child to forgive."

"I preferred that my boy should never know the temptations of wealth," said Mrs. Raynor, when she had grown calmer. "I preferred that he should gain strength by manly struggles, and so left him almost unaided to win his way along the rough path of fortune. But when I saw the uses to which my hitherto useless wealth might now be put, I returned to Philadelphia and reclaimed it. Here, my son, are vouchers for the larger part of all I possess. It is transferred to your name, and is now your own. And here is my wedding present for my daughter. Look up, child, the good minister will be here directly, and before I take you to my room to dress you in the wedding finery which I brought from the great city, look at the present I bestow, — a deed of your dear, old home, clear from all encumbrances, and beyond the power even of this man to whom I am about to give you."

Alice, amidst smiles and blushes and tears, thanked her kind friend, and then, without a misgiving, went away to don the simple bridal dress which she had prepared.

"If your father had still retained his power of mind I should not have done this. But he is influenced by his wife, and it is better to place a refusal beyond his power before we confide to him our own plans and projects. It was only to this arrangement that Arthur yielded when I named my plan."

In a short time the good minister, to whom all had been confided, and who had given his approval, united the pair. When Alice returned to her home, now really hers, and brought thither her husband, armed with a husband's authority, in addition to his immense wealth, even Mrs. Winston was silenced, while Godfrey slunk away and was seen no more. The judge, happy in the happiness of his child, and too imbecile to comprehend fully all that had passed, seemed in a little while to have forgotten Godfrey and his suit, and always welcomed Elverson with peculiar affection to his bedside. As Mrs. Winston cared only for the luxuries to be purchased by Alice's sacrifice, she was finally satisfied to receive them from the hand of Mr. Elverson, and

subsisted upon his bounty for many years, selfish and exacting to the last. Mrs. Raynor still retained her cottage, and the green lane is now daily trodden by the feet of merry children who love to resort to grand-

mamma's fireside; while Elverson is winning the highest honors in the gift of his fellow-citizens, and Alice is still beautiful and good, and is beloved in her home, and greatly admired abroad.

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